

OLD!
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES
retro GAMER
AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO
PLAYSTATION 2: A CELEBRATION
A LOOK BACK AT THE MOST SUCCESSFUL CONSOLE OF ALL TIME
20 KILLER PC GAMES
THE PC TITLES THAT SET NEW STANDARDS FOR THE INDUSTRY
"IT'S NOT SONIC AND IT WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BE"
DEVELOPER MICHAEL BERLYN REVISITS BUBSY THE BOBCAT
30 YEARS OF DRAGON'S LAIR
CREATOR GARY GOLDMAN ON THE LEGACY OF THE ICONIC COIN-OP
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■ NO MORE HEROES
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SPEED DEMON
DOES DEATHCHASE STILL THRILL 30 YEARS ON?
EVOLUTION OF PLATFORMERS
DAVID CRANE AND DAVID PERRY ON THREE DECADES OF THE POPULAR GENRE
ip IMAGINE PUBLISHING
DigitalEdition
GreatDigitalMags.com
ISSUE 114

# THE RETROBATES

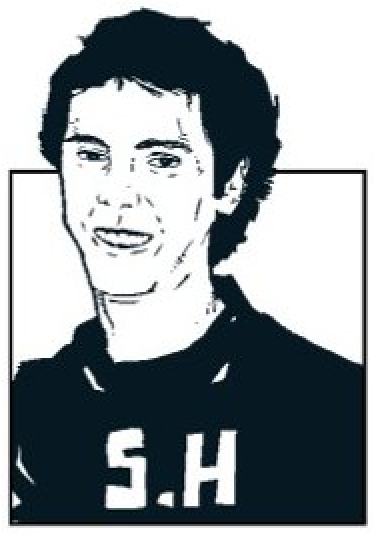
FAVOURITE PLATFORMER




## DARRAN JONES

It's obviously *Strider* and I won't hear anyone say anything different. You jump, there are platforms in it and I'm pretty sure there are a few ladders as well.

**Expertise:**
Juggling a beautiful wife, two gorgeous girls and an award-winning magazine
**Currently playing:**
*Lego City Undercover*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Strider/Robotron: 2084*




## STUART HUNT

Easy, *Donkey Kong* for me. It's a superb platformer I never get bored returning to. I just love the simplicity and addictive challenge.

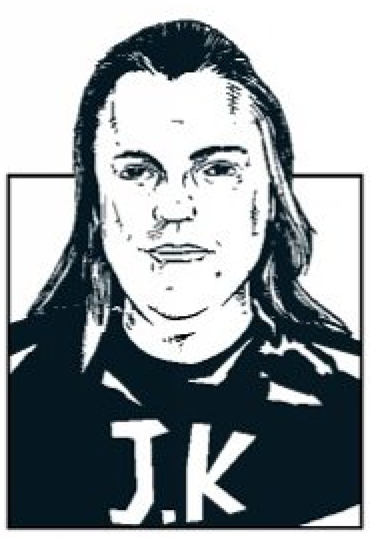
**Expertise:**
Games with platforming bits in them
**Currently Playing:**
*Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow – Mirror Of Fate*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow – Mirror Of Fate*




## PAUL DRURY

The sensible choice is *Super Mario World*, and *Manic Miner* still holds a spell over me but I'd like to nominate *Son Of Blagger*, an experimental scrolling platformer with some sweet touches.

**Expertise:**
Cheerleader cheats
**Currently playing:**
*Dead Space 3*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Sheep In Space*




## JASON KELK

*Mayhem In Monsterland* on the C64 is fast-paced, cutesy fun throughout and, with the bugs removed, may possibly be worth that 100 per cent score from *Commodore Format*.

**Expertise:**
Being a homebrew hero
**Currently playing:**
*Ghost Pilots (Neo Geo)*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Io*




## MARTYN CARROLL

*Jet Set Willy* will always be memorable to me, but the platformer I've gone back to the most over the years is the original *Super Mario Bros.*

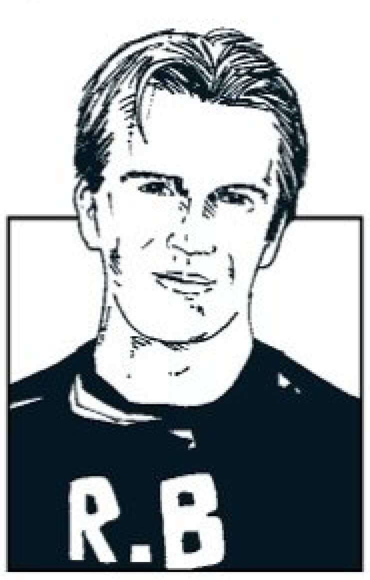
**Expertise:**
Sinclair stuff
**Currently playing:**
*Uncharted 2*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Jet Set Willy*




## PAUL DAVIES

Capcom's *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts* has never been bettered. The snappy control is necessary to survive the hair-raising challenges presented.

**Expertise:**
Repeatedly banging my head against a brick wall
**Currently playing:**
*Halo 4*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Ghouls 'N Ghosts*




## RICHARD BURTON

*Manic Miner*. Bizarreness and humour collide with pixel perfect precision. With sublime level design *Manic Miner* is still hugely playable despite being almost 30 years old. It's 48K of platform perfection.

**Expertise:**
Stuff and nonsense
**Currently playing:**
*Rolling Thunder*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Manic Miner*




## DAVID CROOKES

*Alien Breed*. Powering through those corridors, blasting evil enemies with powerful weapons fostered the sanity that pervades me today.

**Expertise:**
All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation
**Currently playing:**
*Journey*
**Favourite game of all time:**
*Broken Sword*

# LOADING...




**I can still remember the first time I saw *Dragon's Lair*. We were staying at a holiday camp in Porthcawl, Wales; the same rented caravan site that my grandparents took us to every year. Once we were unpacked and had chosen bunk beds I rushed off to the on-site arcade.**

And that's when I saw it. In fact it was impossible to miss due to its prominent placing, huge size and mesmerising screen. As I watched the attract sequence play out I knew that I was looking at the future of videogames. There was just one problem… I didn't have any 50 pences.

I rushed back to the caravan and convinced my Nan to give me a pound (my pocket money for the week). When I returned to the arcade, there was a sizeable crowd growing around *Dragon's Lair*. I was only nine years old at the time and arcade etiquette meant I had to wait my turn, but I elbowed my way past the older boys who were only too kind to let me pass.

I triumphantly slapped my coins down, saying "I'm next". After feeding my first 50 pence into the machine I realised why everyone was so keen to let me play. *Dragon's Lair* was tough, brutally tough and my money disappeared in moments. But I didn't care. I loved the style of the game, the bridge it promised to new gaming experiences. Based on the feedback we've had in our forum it's obvious I'm not the only one.

Enjoy the magazine,





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**>> Load 114** Breathing new life into classic g



## FEATURED



## RETRO REVIVALS



## In the hot seat this month…














## ESSENTIALS



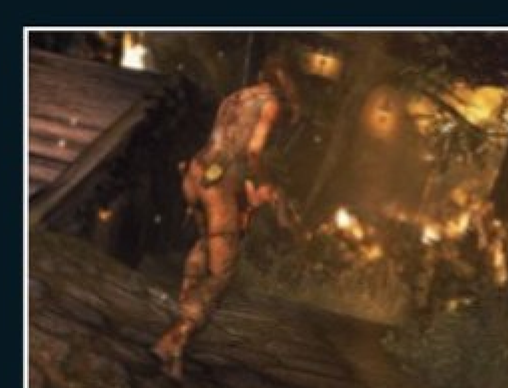
## “One of the only Wii games to get motion control right”

Samuel Roberts





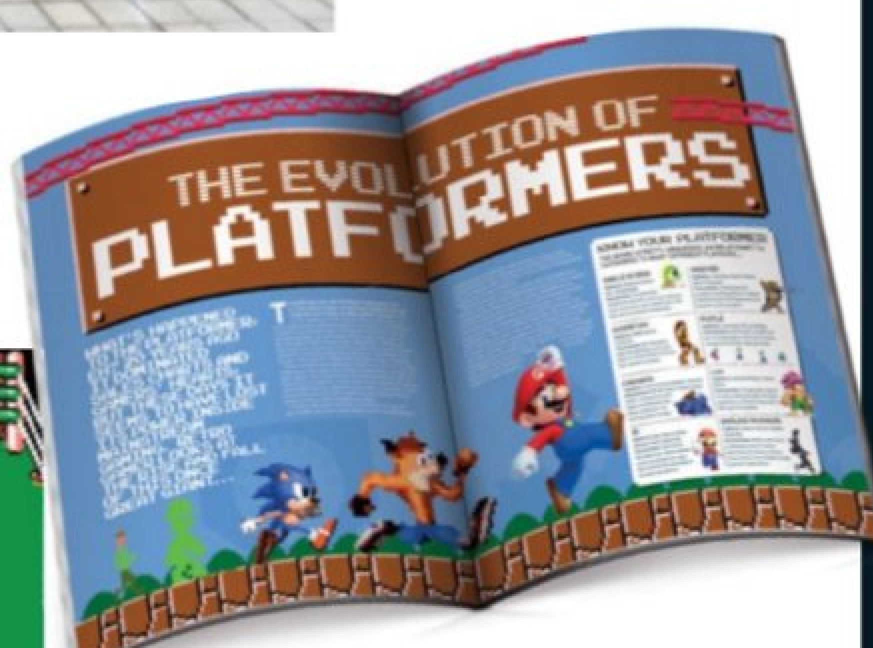
## RETRO RATED

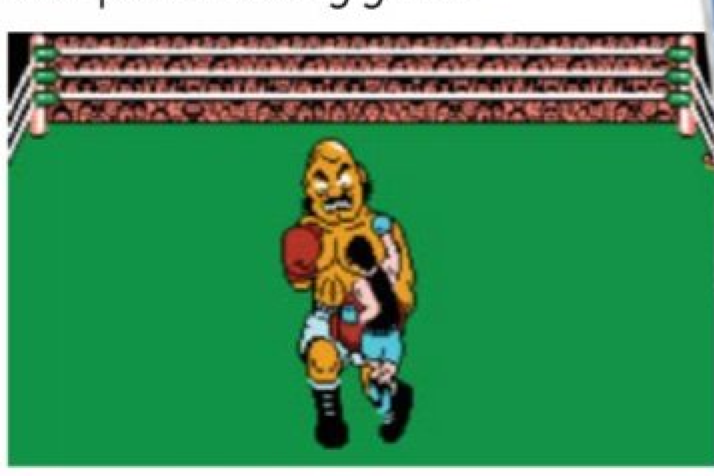















retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL













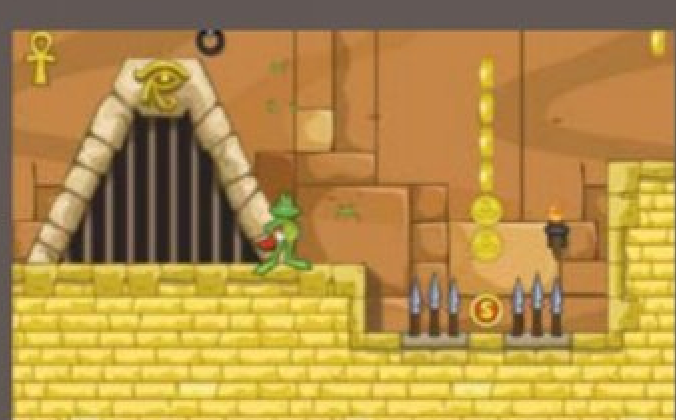

# retro radar

>> GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



>> It's been a relatively quiet month this issue. The big news is that Team17's Superfrog is returning after a 20-year break, but we were also able to speak to one of the people behind the Oric-1, which is currently celebrating its 30th anniversary

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# SUPERFROG EXCLUSIVE

## TEAM17 GIVES US THE LOWDOWN ON ITS HD REMAKE

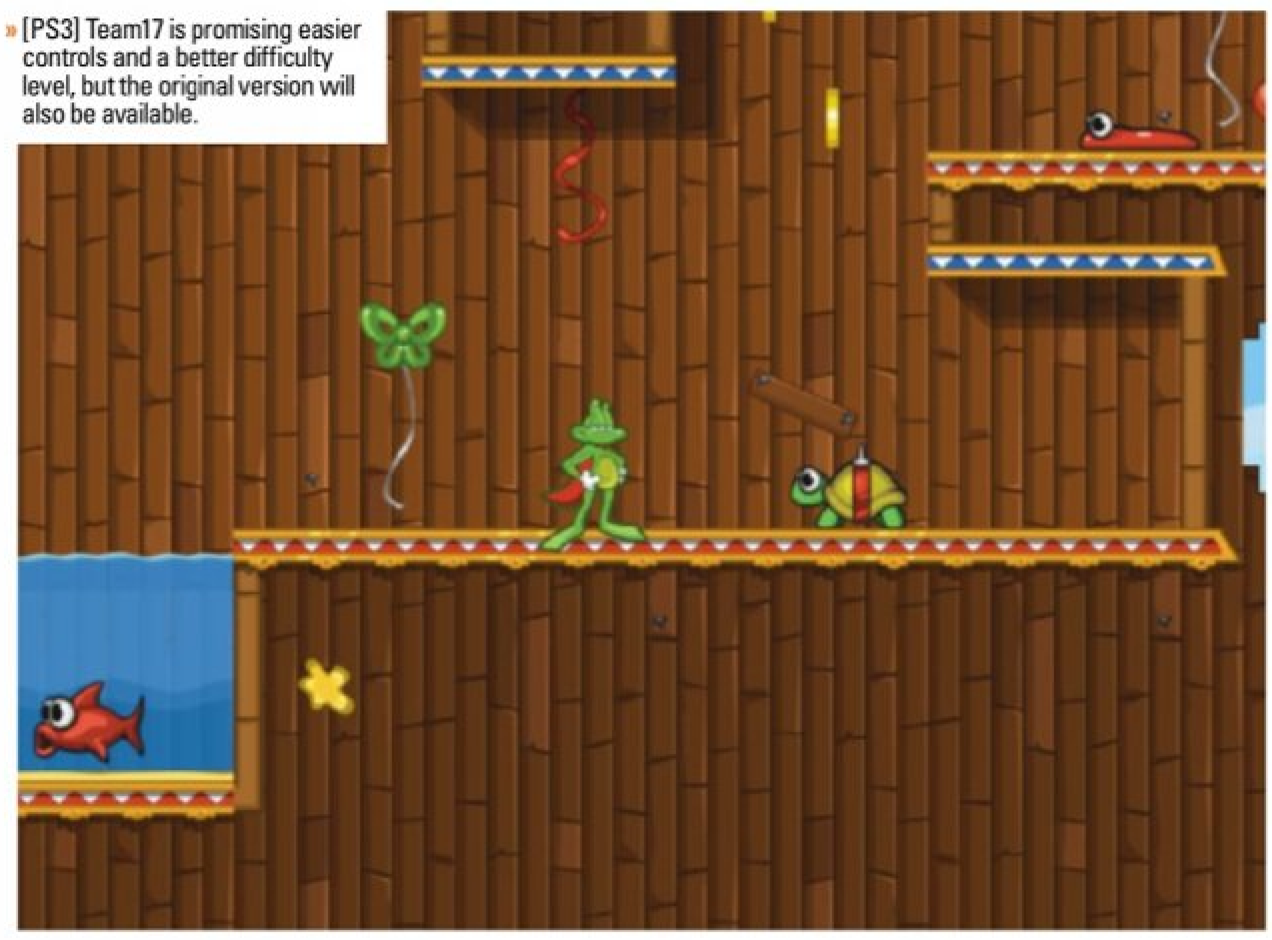
**If you were a PC or Amiga owner, odds are you know who Superfrog is. Created by Team17 in 1993, the game quickly became popular thanks to its cute central character, solid level design and fast-paced action. It became a solid hit for Team17, particularly on the Amiga, where it received positive scores in most magazines of the time. Coded by Andreas Tadic and with excellent cutscenes courtesy of artist Eric Schwartz, *Superfrog* became one of Team17's most requested games, but a sequel never arrived. Now, some 20 years after its original release, Team17 has decided that the time is right for gamers to revisit the 16-bit platformer. We were lucky enough to speak to Team17's creative manager, Kevin Carthew to find out what the studio has in store for the popular frog.**

**So why have you decided to bring back Superfrog?**
Several reasons! Firstly he's a great character and is fondly remembered not just by fans of the original game, but also by many of the development staff here at Team17. As a company we're looking to explore our back catalogue a little bit, and it's definitely one of our favourite past releases. It's also quite creatively fulfilling to be able to explore a genre that some of us don't have an awful lot of experience in. Even though we have the original game to look back on, it's interesting to deconstruct what made the original game what it was, and see how we can improve upon it.

**What will the HD version offer over the original game?**
The new version includes entirely new level content, a brand new score attack play mode (a little bit like an 'Endless Runner' – but with Superfrog!), a level editor, new collectable items, tweaks and improvements to Superfrog himself and of course all new gorgeous high definition cartoon graphics.

**Is it a straight remake, or can we expect to see new sections?**
It's not a direct remake. The original game is very unforgiving, and through testing emulated versions on different devices we found that a straight

> **"It's not a direct remake. The original game is very unforgiving"**
> KEVIN CARTHEW, TEAM17'S CREATIVE MANAGER



» [PS3] Team17 is promising easier controls and a better difficulty level, but the original version will also be available.





» [Amiga] We're still big fans of the original game, even if it is a little tough at times…

port wouldn't do *Superfrog* justice. We've tweaked the character to make play a little more forgiving, tidied up some of the inconsistencies in how he interacts with enemies, and the original levels have been redesigned to remove some of those mean design choices. The new levels allow the player to get more out of what makes Superfrog a fun character to control; they allow the player to run faster and jump farther and higher, without being penalised at every turn. With that said, fans of the original levels need not fear, they're still in the new game – they just exist as a separate mode. We're confident that people will find the new level designs to be an improvement, however.

**What do you think *Superfrog* offers over other platform games?**

You get to play as a caped frog with super powers. I can't think of another platform game that does that. I think we've got the market cornered on this one!

***Superfrog* has currently been announced for PSN, is there any chance it'll eventually appear on other systems?**

It will be heading to PC and we're also looking into the possibility of *Superfrog* making an appearance on mobile and tablets.

**You've recently had big success with the likes of *Alien Breed* on iOS. How suitable would you say the format is for your games?**

Our success would seem to indicate that our games are a good fit for those platforms. However, it does depend a little bit on the game in question. Those devices are really interesting to design for. When we think about rebuilding existing games on those devices they bring along with them a whole raft of unique considerations. It's a great market to be in, and I'm hoping we'll continue to get the opportunity to create for those devices, and maybe even bring a few entirely new designs to them.

**Why do you think *Superfrog* remains so popular with gamers?**

It was one of the better platform games for the home computers at the time. It aped characteristics of other popular console platform games to good effect, and it looked great because of its clean cartoon graphics. I also think personally that the character has a load of charm. I think there's something almost uniquely funny about him as a lead character. Just thinking about him raises a smile for me… there's something a bit underwhelming about the fact that he's a frog. "Super… frog??" ★




## THE RETRO DEBATE

### » Who's excited about Superfrog HD?

VISIT RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM TO HAVE YOUR SAY

**markopoloman**
*Superfrog*… My all time fave Amiga platformer. *Sonic* and *Mario* just didn't do it for me. Love the comedy side of the game and wished they had done *Superfrog 2*.

**clarance**
*Superfrog* was such a pretty game, but it was way too harsh to play for me.

**HalcyonDaze00**
*Superfrog* was good and remakes are ace, I can't wait!

**Vyothric**
Not interested. Not because he's not Sonic though. *Superfrog* is OK, I just couldn't give a crap about remakes.

**Cauterize**
I can't wait. Growing up in a Commodore Amiga household, *Superfrog* was my Lucozade-fuelled amphibian answer to *Sonic*.

**Nakamura**
A fairly mediocre platformer that would have been left for dead on a console. Pretty fun but nothing to write home about.

**batman877**
Very much looking forward to it. I used to own and enjoy the majority of Team17's games on the Amiga so this update is a pleasant surprise. I've just finished playing their *Alien Trilogy* remake, which was great fun.

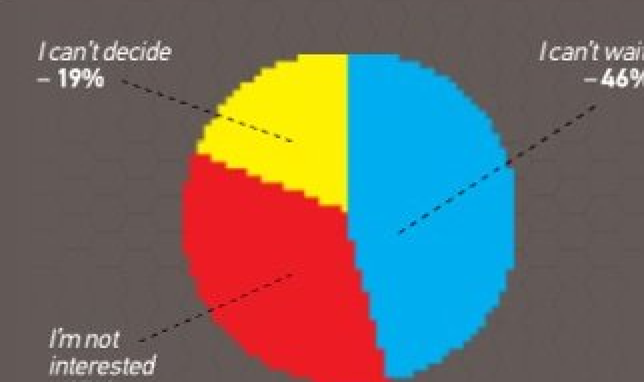
**Trixta**
Hated the game, Amiga just couldn't get platformers right.

**Scooby1970**
I remember loving this game, and the music was great too. If the price is right I'll get the new remastered version, but not if its more than a fiver!

**thl**
It's been a long time that I remember playing this game and I really liked it. Never got around completing it due to that difficulty level, otherwise it's a very solid platfomer.

### FORUM OPINION

**Who's excited about Superfrog HD?**



# retrocolumns

>> RETRO RECOLLECTIONS WITH CELEB IAIN LEE

**Here's the bio...**
Iain Lee has been a fervent gamer since he was tiny. And that was a long time ago. In between playing computer games and collecting crap from eBay, he has presented Channel 4's *The 11 O'Clock Show* and *Rise*, and currently does bits of stand-up as well as presenting the *2 Hour Long Late Night Radio Show* on Absolute Radio at 11pm.

VECTREX
CASSETTE




Hi there, my name's **Iain Lee**. You might remember me from Thumb Bandits, The 11 O'Clock Show and Absolute Radio, but now I'm here to confess my love for retro



# I Just Gave It All Away

**For not the first time in my life, I find myself enduring the very retro situation of having no internet. I've moved house again and for the first time in 20 years I am living outside of London. While this is incredibly freeing and has immediately taken a massive load from my shoulders, just six days into it I am starting to get well pissed off without the old WWW.**

I've not moved to the sticks or anything. I WILL be getting online one day, it does exist here, but my service provider has screwed up royally and it's going to be at least 20 more days until I get something. Even the dongle it promised me has been sent to the old house and the 3G here just isn't happening. This article is being written on my Mac which in its current state resembles a very expensive typewriter, before being transferred to a memory stick, driven to Luton, uploaded to a work PC and only then being emailed to the editor.

It would be easier and more economic to send the entire bloody thing piece by piece on separate pigeons, each one of those dirty bird scum carrying one word at a time to **RG** Towers. Or perhaps this month Darran could just put my phone number on my page and those of you who wanted to read the article could phone me up and I will recite it to you in a comedy accent of your choosing.

This lack of technology actually fits in with my current lifestyle because I am giving most of it away. Long time endurers of this monthly rant may recall me talking about the 'stresses' I had because I wasn't sure if I had space for my whole retro collection. Well, I finally grew a pair and decided to get rid of all of it*.

I couldn't chuck it, I didn't want to eBay it because that would give me time to change my mind, so I tweeted it. And luckily for me, a **Retro Gamer** reader (who shall remain anonymous, unless he wants to break his silence) was following me, got in touch, and within a few hours was in my hallway taking away my entire collection**.

It actually wasn't that difficult. Once I'd made the decision, it felt incredibly cathartic. Most of it had lived in the attic for two years and hadn't been touched. And that was the key. This stuff is meant to be used and played with and looked at and admired. I wasn't doing that. But I know the gentleman who took it WILL do that.

This isn't the end of my love affair with gaming's past. Far from it. This is the beginning of a new phase. I can and will expand my collection again but this time, on my terms, buying things that I know I will use and get the most of. Unfortunately, without the internet, it may be a while before I can start!

This stuff is meant to be used and played with and looked at and admired

*** I didn't get rid of ALL of it, just don't tell my wife.**
**** Okay, I kept the Vectrex.**




# ORIC-1 TURNS 30

## WE CELEBRATE THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE SPECTRUM'S PLUCKY COMPETITOR

**Tangerine Computer Systems' Oric-1 was born 30 years ago. Created as a rival to the ZX Spectrum, it was beset by various problems at launch, most notably a factory fire that wiped out at least 7000 machines. It eventually began to sell, often outselling other home computers like the Dragon 32 and ZX81, but never managed to trouble Sinclair's ZX Spectrum.**

Paul Kaufman, who was part of the software team, can still recall the pressure from the Oric's launch. "Once the Oric was announced, there was a huge demand for it, so there was a lot of pressure to get them shipping as quickly as we could." But was there ever really a chance for the Oric-1 to do well when it was up against such popular machines?

Dr Paul Johnson, who created the machine, thinks so. "The Spectrum was poorly designed and had a weak spec. The keyboard was rubbish and so was the sound. Oric's sound system was really good in its day, three channels each with three voices. All the Spectrum could do was squeak! Our screen width was 48 characters and the Spectrum was 32. Also we had a direct RGB output which is the reason we were number one in France with something like 80 per cent market share, or so we were told."

Although the Oric-1 was impressive from a technical point of view, the Oric-1 team knew that specs weren't enough to make a top-selling home computer, with Paul Kaufman telling us that securing the right people to code for the machine was just as important. "We spent a lot of time searching for and nurturing programmers to help produce games, utilities and 'business' programs such as word processors, spreadsheets etc," he continues. "It was mainly [seen] as a home or small business machine."

With the Oric-1 seen mainly as a business machine, games were not plentiful on the system, but there were still a number of classics ranging from *Don't Press The Letter Q*, to *Doggy* and *Manic Miner*. Paul Kaufman also remembers the release of *Oric Chess*, being a notable game for the company, but not for the right reasons… "One of the earliest titles we released was *Oric Chess*. We didn't realise it for several months, but it contained a small bug which effectively meant that it cheated when it played!" he recalls.

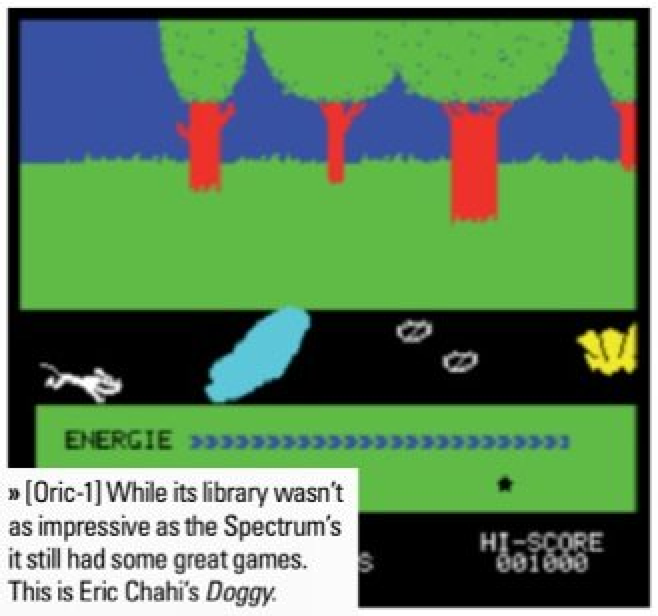
"Initially we had compliments from chess-playing users who reported how tough it was to beat. Then it dawned on them that something was amiss. Then they noticed that pieces were vanishing off the board or were changing into other pieces! We started getting calls from really angry users. It was quite difficult to fix the bug and because by then there were several thousand users who would all need replacement cassettes, we just kept it very quiet!"

» Paul Kaufman (right) catches up with Dr Paul Johnson, who was heavily involved with the Oric-1's creation.



Sadly, despite good initial sales, the Oric-1 wasn't able to make the dent in the Spectrum sales that Tangerine Computer Systems wanted. The machine was discontinued in January 1984, by which time Sinclair's machine had sold 1 million units. The Oric-1 by comparison managed around 160,000 in the UK. Despite this, Paul Kaufman has nothing but fond memories of the machine and the time he spent on it, telling us: "It was great to be involved in something that, at the time, was pretty much state of the art."

Dr Paul Johnson feels the same way. "We were told that the Oric was the computer that really worried Clive Sinclair in the early days. Sinclair had been around for years before home computers came along. He did Hi-fi and before that radio kits. He had years of experience and the rest of us had none. He knew how to market."




» [Oric-1] While its library wasn't as impressive as the Spectrum's it still had some great games. This is Eric Chahi's *Doggy*.



» The original Tansoft team, who were responsible for many great Oric-1 games.

**Here's my bio...**
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.




# Mean Machines

As I write this it is mere days until Sony unveils PlayStation 4, and who knows maybe Microsoft will strike back with a first look at a new Xbox. I kind of don't care. Must be ill.

Sorry if the title of this month's column is misleading; I'm not going to sing the praises of the legendary magazine that Jaz, Rich, Oz and Gary produced back in the day. It's kind of related though, because the thinking behind *Mean Machines* was that gaming consoles would kick your ass. And they surely did… back in the Nineties. Nowadays, well, they're only "hugely impressive" and such.

Fighting talk has all but vanished from gaming conversation of late, and I miss it! Oh yes I do! It used to be that playing *Mega Man* on Game Boy made you tough, and *Shinobi* on Game Gear a total badass. Somewhere in this logic, I'm sure, was the unspoken truth that any enjoyment from fast-moving action was nearly impossible on these consoles. I remember sweating just to see the sprites in *Battletoads* on the original sage-green micro-screen from Nintendo. That bit with the boulder?

Anyway, at the point in history when hardware manufacturers could rightly say this new thing will make you puke for months because IT'S THAT AWESOME, there's no electricity in the air – hardly a microvolt. As you're reading this, Sony will have made some claims for its next generation machine, which few experienced gamers will honestly believe. Microsoft might've countered with some dryzabone tech specs of its own. We'll have seen something running on the Unreal Engine or similar, in 1080p (yawn), some footage of John Madden maybe – just a helmet perhaps – and a few cars tearing around a race circuit. We'll say, "there it is" and that will be that.

Will fights break out in classrooms and office blocks nationwide? I doubt it. They used to (at Priory Court in Farringdon, at any rate). Will there be queues around the block at midnight when PS4 and Xbox hit the high street? Maybe… but it's so much easier to wake up and wait for the postman.

I hope I'm wrong, you know. I hope Sony kicked my ass on 20 February, and then Microsoft made it doubly sore the following day. I hope I get angry phone calls from my best friends telling me I'm an idiot because I reckon one console is way better than the other… long before I even play it! I hope it nearly comes to blows over whether Bungie's *Destiny* will rock harder on Xbox or PlayStation. But it isn't going to happen, because we have no tiny stupid facts that mere mortals can point to any more.

In a way, I'm finding my own, secret satisfaction from realising that today's gaming machines – or rather the ones of tomorrow – are so ridiculously powerful that you may as well ask regular guys to compare blueprints of space rockets. We have no real clue what's going on under the hood.

There's no struggle anymore – nothing to rally for or against. I still think it's amazing that Dhalsim can breathe fire in *Street Fighter II*, but I take the visuals in the new *Tomb Raider* for granted. No pain, no gain? Is that it? There, problem solved.



retroradar

>> GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



# *A MOMENT WITH... Doug TenNapel

Each issue Retro Gamer speaks to a legend of the games industry, this month we caught up with Doug TenNapel, Earthworm Jim's creator

## Who is Doug TenNapel?

Award-winning animator Doug TenNapel moved into videogames in the early Nineties, working as an artist for BlueSky Software and Virgin Interactive. He shot to recognition with *Earthworm Jim*, which was picked up by David Perry's game studio Shiny Entertainment and turned into a hugely successful game franchise. These days, Doug focuses on writing graphic novels, television projects, and being a games industry consultant.

**You started your career in television animation, how did you move into games?**
Television trained me to work in entertainment production. Back in the early Nineties, videogame production was exploding and there weren't enough bodies to do the work. I was an adequate animator so a number of opportunities in games opened up to me. Part skill, part being in the right place at the right time.

**You've created graphic novels, videogames and television shows. Which form of medium do you most prefer and why?**
Games and television are huge undertakings that require a lot of herding cats! Each medium has its strengths and weaknesses, but I'm drawn to graphic novels because I can pull off the whole thing virtually by myself.

**Among gamers you're best known for creating *Earthworm Jim*. Were you surprised by how successful and popular the character became?**
I am in hindsight. We had no idea at the time of producing *EWJ* that we would still be talking about it 20 years later. It opened my eyes to the power of mass media.

**You left Shiny Entertainment to set up your own game studio, The Neverhood. What was that experience like, looking back?**
It was incredibly fulfilling to get to start my own company and make my own game. I had a great mentor, Dave Perry, who did that same thing a number of times! *Neverhood* was the kind of game that could only have happened in my own company. Again, pulling that off was part skill and part being in the right place at the right time.

**Do you miss working in the games industry and would you ever consider a return?**
I do some consulting in games from time to time, so I'm not dead yet. I do love the medium of games and I miss working in any medium because I'm drawn to opportunity! But I sure don't miss the downside of games; huge, expensive teams limited by what the market is willing to take risks on. If the right opportunity came along I'd love to dive into games again and make the magic with the right team and freedom to create. Those opportunities are less likely to happen today than in the mid Nineties.

» Doug is currently working on *The Doug TenNapel Sketchbook Archives*, which recently met its target on Kickstarter. Containing previously unseen artwork and sketches, it's a must for fans of his work.



» Among gamers, Doug is best known for creating *Earthworm Jim* and founding The Neverhood, an innovative game studio that created claymation videogames.

» Doug worked as an artist on BlueSky Software's *Ren & Stimpy: Stimpy's Invention* and *Jurassic Park* for the Mega Drive.

**Tell us about your recent Kickstarter project, *The Doug TenNapel Sketchbook Archives*. What inspired you to release the book and turn to crowd funding?**
As I said, I'm attracted to opportunity and Kickstarter was an open door just waiting to be walked through. I was initially going to self fund a game, but I thought a deluxe, self published book of my best sketchwork would be a funner, more interesting project to create. For the record I think crowd funding for games is the best chance games have to circumvent some of what's wrong with the market and make compelling, unique games.

**The book will contain sketches spanning your entire career, but can you remember the first character you ever sketched?**
I started creating my own monsters and heroes back in 4th grade [Year 5]. Some of them were pretty bad, like this Godzilla-type creature that could win any fight by shooting electricity out of his mouth and it would infinitely destroy anything it touched. I had to get a lot of lame ideas out of the way before I'd eventually create *EWJ*. That's about 20 years of bad ideas before the really good ones came along.

**When do you expect the book to be completed and how can our readers purchase a copy?**
I anticipate the book will be shipping this April, and your readers will have a hard time getting one since I deliberately under-printed them to keep the value up for the Kickstarter donors. It cost the Kickstarter donors $25 but will cost any latecomers $100: they can email me and place a last-minute order.

**Are you working on any other projects at the moment?**
I just finished my graphic novel *Nnewts* (preview the webcomic at www.Nnewts.com). *EWJ* fans who remember the Blind Cave Salamander level in *EWJ2* will be familiar with my amphibian obsession. The *Nnewts* book won't be out until next year, but it's best described as my *LOTR/King Arthur* with amphibians.

**Finally, what's the best piece of advice you can give to a budding artist?**
Make stuff and don't ask other people for permission to do so. There's nothing to stop a graphic novelist at any level from making a book. Period.



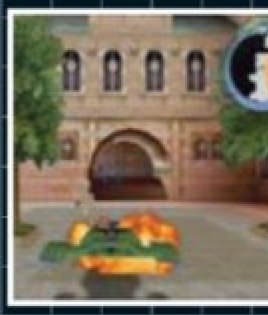
# retrodiary

## 29 March – 25 April

>> A month of retro events both past and present



**29 March 1998**
■ *Parasite Eve*, a horror RPG, is released in Japan by Squaresoft on PlayStation and was a sequel to a novel of the same name.



**30 March 2001**
■ LucasArts released *Star Wars: Episode 1 – Battle For Naboo* on the Nintendo 64.



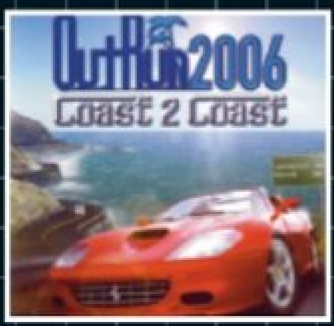

**30 March 1997**
■ Jordan Mechner's adventure *The Last Express* was published by Brøderbund for PC. It is one of few games to run in real time.

**30 March 2007**
■ Sega released *After Burner: Black Falcon*, part of the famous combat simulation game franchise, exclusively on PSP.

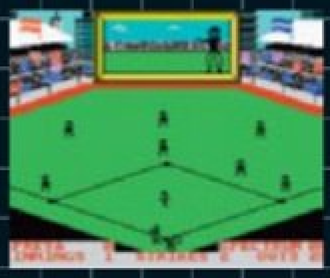





**31 March 1998**
■ Sci-fi strategy game *StarCraft* was released on PC. It became the biggest selling PC game of the year, shifting 1.5 million copies.




**31 March 2006**
■ Sega released *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast* simultaneously on PlayStation 2, Xbox and PlayStation Portable in Europe.



**1 April 1985**
■ *World Series Baseball* by Imagine Software was released on the Commodore 64 and ZX Spectrum.



**2 April 1985**
■ Palace Software's superb *Cauldron* is released on the Commodore 64 and ZX Spectrum. It's the best broomstick-riding game ever…



**3 April 2012**
■ The underwhelming *Kinect Star Wars* for Xbox 360 is released. Wielding a lightsaber in your lounge has never been so disappointing…




**9 April 2003**
■ Fast paced racing game *Midnight Club II* was published by Rockstar Games for the PlayStation 2.



**12 April 2007**
■ *MapleStory*, a 2D free-to-play PC MMORPG was launched in Europe four years after its initial release in South Korea.

XBOX LIVE

**15 April 2010**
■ Xbox Live support was discontinued for the original Xbox console.



**16 April 1990**
■ Toaplan released its newest arcade coin-op game, the marvellously marvellous *Snow Bros.*



**19 April 1985**
■ *Bruce Lee*, US Gold's most excellent platform/beat-'em-up game, was released on the Spectrum.




**19 April 2004**
■ The lost dev disks for *Mega Tree*, the third Miner Willy game by Software Projects, were auctioned on eBay for charity.



**20 April 2004**
■ *Forbidden Siren*, SCE Japan Studio's freakishly scary horror game gets released in US, complete with hilarious dubbing.



**22 April 2004**
The last officially released Neo Geo game went on sale, the 2D beat-'em-up *Samurai Shodown Zero Special*.




**22 April 2005**
■ *Jade Empire*, an action RPG developed by BioWare, was released in Europe on Xbox.



**23 April 1982**
■ Sinclair Research released its ZX Spectrum home computer. Fans of computer keyboards that felt like dead flesh rejoiced.



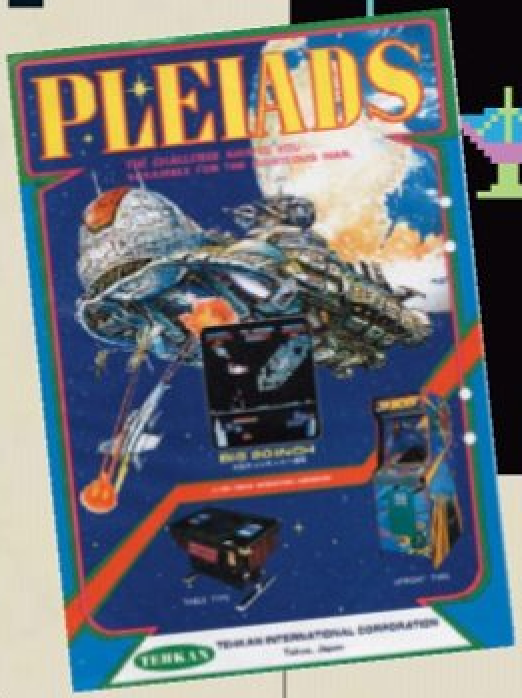

**25 April 2013**
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets.

# BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

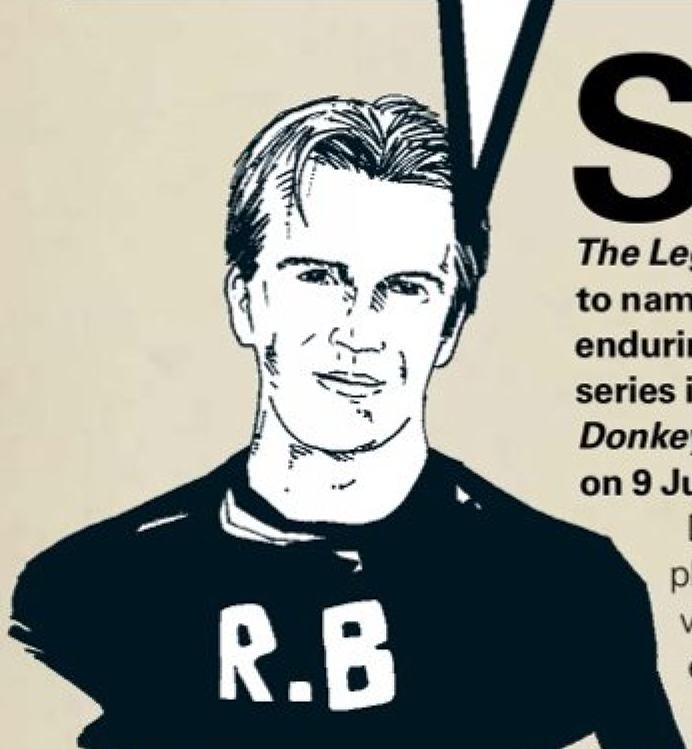
# THE LATEST NEWS FROM JULY 1981



» [Arcade] Centuri, the people behind *Phoenix*, release *Pleiads* but it wasn't a patch on its earlier shoot-'em-up.




**JULY 81 – Donkey Kong rolls out the barrel while Mario debuts, SNK's Vanguard is a multi-directional success, Centuri's Pleiads wasn't, Octopus grabs you and Polybius melts your brain…**




**Shigeru Miyamoto created some of the most iconic videogames franchises of all time; *Mario, Star Fox, The Legend Of Zelda* and *F-Zero* to name but four. One of his most enduring and fondly remembered series in videogaming history remains *Donkey Kong,* which arrived in arcades on 9 July 1981.**

Despite being a single-screen platform game, *Donkey Kong* was imaginatively designed and executed perfectly. It was one of the first platform games to introduce jumping as a control and also one of the first videogames to have a narrative run throughout the game, which was enhanced by cutscenes between each level.

You played the character of Jumpman who must make his way to the top of the industrialised screen by means of girders and ladders to attempt to save his girlfriend, Pauline, who has been kidnapped by his pet gorilla. Donkey Kong looked imposing while defiantly lobbing barrels and assorted objects as Jumpman progresses, although these can be countered with the aid of a trusty hammer.

With just four levels, albeit acutely different with the inclusion of elevators on later screens, *Donkey Kong* became a worldwide hit for Nintendo and really made inroads into the North American videogames market, for which it specifically designed the game.

The game name was chosen for this reason although various urban legends ranging from a spelling mistake or poor interpretation were bounced around as possible reasons for using donkey instead of monkey in the title. Miyamoto put us right by stating that the donkey part referred to stubborn stupidity rather than a cock-up in the translation department.

Although *Donkey Kong* was the star of the game, Jumpman would later become the videogaming luminary Mario who would resume battle with his monkey foe in many future games. Needless to say, *Donkey Kong* was successfully converted to virtually every conceivable videogaming system.

Another company attempting to make a name in America was SNK and it did that by publishing the TOSE-developed arcade game *Vanguard. Vanguard* was a scrolling shoot-'em-up at heart but with many new original features that raised it above its contemporaries in terms of variety and playability.



Most noticeable was that it was a multi-directional scroller, moving horizontally, vertically and even diagonally. The difficulty factor was tempered with the addition of four fire buttons allowing simultaneous multi-directional firing. Depleting fuel levels and end of level bosses all added to *Vanguard*'s allure.

*Vanguard* was obviously influenced by the likes of *Defender* and *Scramble*, avoiding obstacles while progressing through the enemy strewn levels felt like it was the precursor to games like *R-Type*.

The addition of some dodgy speech synthesis informing you of your current level and start up game music borrowed from *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* helped *Vanguard* become a big success for SNK in America.

Another coin-op scrolling shoot-'em-up new out this month was *Pleiads* by Centuri. Hoping to build on the huge success that Centuri's *Phoenix* had, it kept similar elements of the gameplay in

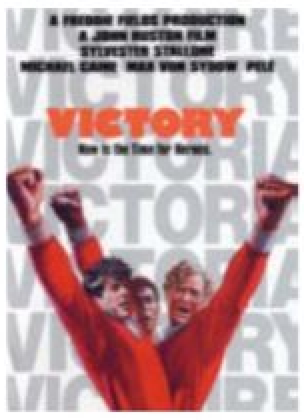



» [Game & Watch] Keep away from those big octopus tentacles as you gather the treasure.

# CHARTS

## JULY 1981 NEWS

2 July saw the UK release of a truly atrocious Disney movie, *Condorman*, starring Michael Crawford. Playing a comic book artist he somehow gets entangled in the defection of a female KGB agent. The CIA ask for his help, he refuses but changes his mind after requesting they make him a gadget enhanced Condorman superhero suit. The movie was panned by virtually everyone who had the misfortune to see it.




7 July was also the world premiere of the fantastical football movie that was *Escape To Victory*. During World War II, the Nazi propaganda machine came up with the idea of a football match pitting a Nazi team against a team made up from the Allied Prisoners Of War. The Allied Forces agree to the game but decide to use the event as cover for a half-time escape. The sight of Sylvester Stallone pretending to be a goalkeeper can only be bettered by Pele's equalising goal for the Allied side, an overhead bicycle kick, all done with a broken arm.

29 July saw the marriage of Charles, Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer at St Paul's Cathedral, London. The congregation was 3,500 strong, the crowds lining the route to St Paul's numbered over a million and an estimated worldwide television audience of over 750 million watched the spectacle making it the most viewed television broadcast ever.

*Pleiads* with waves of swooping bird-like ships and well protected motherships.

It looked and played great but was not very well received by arcade dwellers. With the likes of *Vanguard* showing how much progression in the shoot-'em-up genre there had been, *Pleiads* was considered old hat even in mid-1981.

Pocket videogaming was still relatively new but Nintendo was slowly beginning to dominate with a steady flow of fun and simple games in its expanding Game & Watch series. The last offering in this series was *Octopus*, which was released on 16 July.

You control a deep sea diver who must plunge from the safety of the boat into the ocean, dive down to the sea floor and take as much gold from the sunken treasure chest as possible. Unfortunately there is a giant octopus guarding the chest which has equally giant tentacles which must be negotiated past. Touch one and you lose a life, lose three lives and its game over.

*Octopus* was the second in the Widescreen series of Game & Watch games and was another hit for Nintendo with sales well over 250,000 units. *Octopus* was the tenth release in the Game & Watch series in the 15 months since they were introduced. Little did we know that these handhelds would run to an eventual range of 59 games, selling in excess of 43 million units over 11 years and would inspire the Nintendo DS.



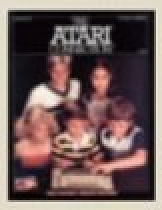

A new arcade coin-op may (or may not) have been released this month. *Polybius* was the title and an urban legend was born. *Polybius* was reportedly released in small numbers in a test area in Portland, Oregon, USA. This new and so far unheard of arcade game was described as being a vector graphic styled shoot-'em-up in the mould of Atari's *Tempest*.

It was supposedly massively popular with queues in arcades to play it often resulting in violent scenes as gamers were frustrated with the wait to play. *Polybius* was withdrawn after a short period of time after gamers were found to suffer from a variety of mind-bending ailments including intense stress, insomnia, night terrors, panic attacks and even suicidal tendencies. Luckily for the creators they also suffered amnesia.

During its short release mysterious government officials collated unknown information from each machine. People have stated they thought *Polybius* was a government-funded psychoactive experiment and that the game itself contained subliminal messaging.

No machines were ever seen again, no ROMs have ever been found and no proof of existence ever forthcoming. *Polybius* remains an urban legend thought to have started as a Usenet hoax yet every so often someone claims to have a prototype of the ROM or an original cabinet…

## THIS MONTH IN…



### ATARI CONNECTION

*AC* investigated why Bushnell and Dabney called their company Atari. Their first choice, Syzygy, had already been registered so they decided to use words from their favourite boardgame *Go*. Sente, Atari and Hanne were listed in preferential order and thankfully their second choice was chosen. Sente 2600 console anyone?





### YOUR COMPUTER

*YC* looked at the Atari 400/800 and how they faired as games machines. The reviewer was downbeat stating that computer games hadn't (and wouldn't) come of age until a holographic version of *Star Raiders* was available to convince him he was in space. Some might say he was already there.






### COIN CONNECTION

The main story in *Coin Connection*, the magazine for coin-op arcade game distributors, was that Atari would be sponsoring the first coin-op games World Championship to be held in Chicago with prize money of $50,000. The main competition game would be Atari's newly released *Centipede*.



## JULY 1981

### ARCADE



**1** Pac-Man (Namco)
**2** Centipede (Atari)
**3** Missile Command (Atari)
**4** Phoenix (Centuri)
**5** Battlezone (Atari)

### ATARI 2600




**1** Missile Command (Atari)
**2** Pele's Soccer (Atari
**3** Warlords (Atari)
**4** Dragster (Activision)
**5** Space Invaders (Atari)

### ACORN ATOM




**1** Fruit Machine (Bug-Byte)
**2** Invader Force (Micro Power)
**3** Atom Invaders (Bug-Byte)
**4** Demon Dungeon (Micro Power)
**5** Backgammon (Bug Byte)

### MUSIC

**1** Ghost Town (The Specials)
**2** Stars On 45: Volume 2 (Starsound)
**3** Can Can (Bad Manners)
**4** Body Talk (Imagination)
**5** One Day In Your Life (Michael Jackson)

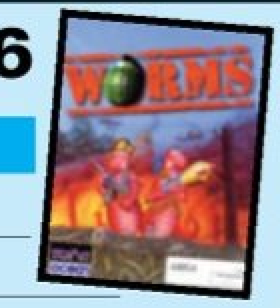


# BACK TO THE NINETIES

## CHARTS



### JANUARY 1996

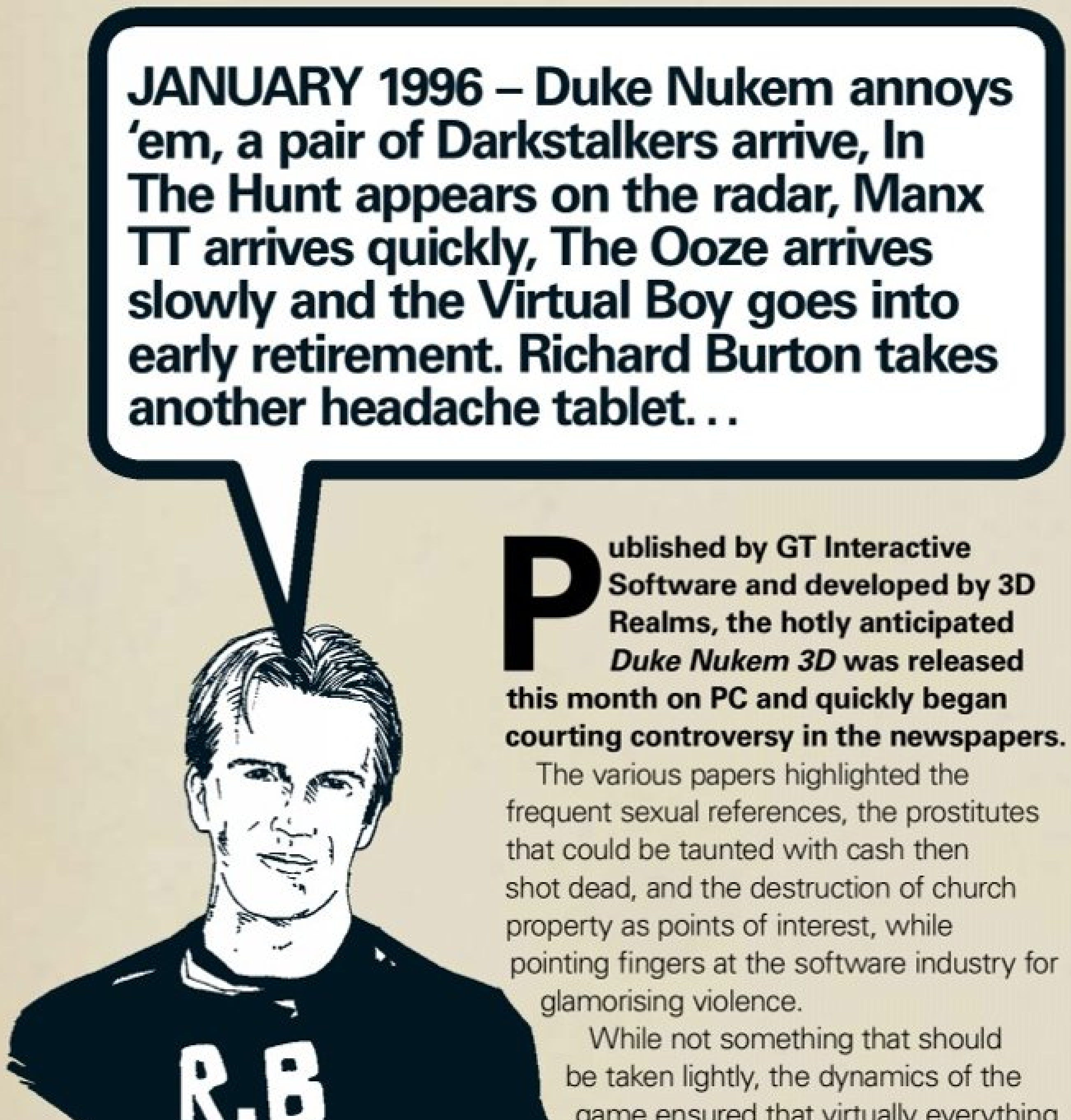


| AMIGA | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Worms (Ocean) |
| 2 | Alien Breed 3D (Ocean) |
| 3 | Sensible World Of Soccer (Virgin) |
| 4 | Player Manager 2 (Virgin) |
| 5 | Super Skidmarks (Guildhall Leisure) |

» [Sega Saturn] Saturn gamers missed out on the original *Darkstalkers* with Capcom going straight to the sequel. Good move.




# THE LATEST NEWS FROM JANUARY 1996




**Published by GT Interactive Software and developed by 3D Realms, the hotly anticipated *Duke Nukem 3D* was released this month on PC and quickly began courting controversy in the newspapers.**

The various papers highlighted the frequent sexual references, the prostitutes that could be taunted with cash then shot dead, and the destruction of church property as points of interest, while pointing fingers at the software industry for glamorising violence.

While not something that should be taken lightly, the dynamics of the game ensured that virtually everything in the *Duke Nukem 3D* environment could be shot at and destroyed, and not just the items and people that was causing aged newspaper hacks so much indignation. Of course, the newspapers blamed everything from war, famine and brown corduroy jackets with elbow patches on games of this ilk. They still do.

The fact of the matter was that *Duke Nukem 3D* was an amazing game. Whether the controversial aspects were there as considered gameplay elements or as a marketing ploy to rile the anti-videogame violence brigade was open for debate. However, the papers unwittingly did a better job of selling the game to the massed ranks of the teenage unwashed than a full page advert in the latest videogames magazine ever could.

Ingenious level designs covering a variety of settings were beautifully put together allowing for free roaming exploration rather than the linear routes that similar first-person shooters often took. Then there was the varied array of weapons – like the awesome Devastator rocket launcher – that would keep a small army happy for days. It also helped that the guns felt so punchy to use.



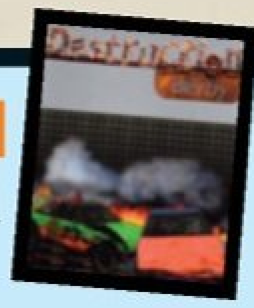
» [PC] *Duke Nukem 3D* – one of the most controversial first-person-shooters released - violent, bloody and brilliant.

With over 3.5 million unit sales it was a terrific success for such a reviled game at that time. Its legacy as one of the greatest and most influential first-person shooters ever is surely warranted. We'll just pretend *Duke Nukem Forever* never happened.

Capcom's latest press release revealed that its beat-'em-up arcade game *Darkstalkers: The Night Warriors* was to be converted to Sony's PlayStation. While 2D beat-'em-ups were in plentiful supply and all fairly similar, *Darkstalkers* went with a gothic Hammer Horror vibe with characters based on classic monsters such as the werewolf, mummy, vampire and golem all created in a cartoony style that offered striking detail.

Capcom also revealed it would be releasing the *Darkstalkers* sequel exclusively on the Sega Saturn. Entitled *Night Warriors: Darkstalkers' Revenge*, it was similar to the original but with a new roster of characters. With its attractively designed backgrounds and tweaked game mechanics it made for

### PC



1. Destruction Derby (Sony)
2. Hexen (GT Interactive)
3. FIFA International Football 96 (Electronic Arts)
4. Worms (Ocean)
5. Command And Conquer (Virgin Interactive)

### SNES



1. Killer Instinct (Nintendo)
2. FIFA '96 (Electronic Arts)
3. Mortal Kombat 2 (Acclaim)
4. Earthworm Jim 2 (Virgin Interactive)
5. Micro Machines 2 (Ocean)

### MUSIC




1. Earth Song (Michael Jackson)
2. Jesus To A Child (George Michael)
3. Spaceman (Babylon Zoo)
4. Father And Son (Boyzone)
5. So Pure (Baby D)




» [Mega Drive] *The Ooze* is original and has an interesting premise but just didn't engage gamers enough in gameplay.




» [Sega Saturn] It's from Irem, it's like *R-Type*, it's underwater and it's often forgotten about.

a smoother slicker game and was set to become one of the best fighting games on the system.

Another coin-op being converted was the woefully under appreciated *In The Hunt* from Irem. This 2D scrolling shoot-'em-up takes you under the ocean for a spot of submarine combat. You battle through seven large levels of blasting action as you take on another Earth-threatening foe intent on destroying all and sundry. You manoeuvre your submarine through the levels ultimately arriving at a secret lair for the final climatic showdown.

*In The Hunt* played like an underwater *R-Type* and that's not unsurprising as the same team developed both titles. The game is fairly formulaic in that there are the usual power-ups, upgradeable weaponry and level progression feels much like *R-Type* but given the gameplay is fast, frenetic and fun that could be forgiven.

New to arcades from the people who brought you *Sega Rally* was *Manx TT Super Bike*, based on the startling spectacle of the challenging Manx TT motorcycle race held annually on the Isle Of Man. With the in-game track being a reproduction of the real racetrack, you could now happily race your super bike at 180mph around country lanes and slam yourself into a corner shop without any fear of your limbs coming away in the process.

*Manx TT Super Bike* was controlled by a full size ride-on motorcycle which gave the players a more realistic feel for the game. While some other ride-on styled coin-ops were more for show than enhanced gameplay, *Manx TT* uniquely allowed the player to control their motorcycle without having to put your feet on the floor recreating the extreme banking into corners action which was lost on other motorcycle coin-ops such as *Hang-On*.

Sega showed support for its aging Mega Drive with a new release entitled *The Ooze*. You play the said ooze after being transformed into the green gloop by your unforgiving boss at a science laboratory. He flushes you down the drain and the task begins of making your way back to the laboratory while picking up pieces of your DNA to return to your more normal solid self. Original concept it may have been, chock full of playability it wasn't.

Nintendo announced that the ill-fated attempt at 3D gaming, the headache inducing Virtual Boy, had been discontinued in Japan as of the end of December 1995. Having been released five months earlier, an unenthusiastic response from Japanese gamers led to price reduction after price reduction until Nintendo did the humane thing and pulled the plug on one of its biggest videogaming misjudgements.

Nintendo also stated that the American release of the Virtual Boy would be discontinued in March 96 and the proposed European PAL version axed.

Long-running games magazine *Computer & Video Games* reviewing team ran their beady eyes over the newly released and imported games of the month, deciding that the titles you should throw money at were; *Virtua Fighter 2* (Sega Saturn, Sega), *Virtua Cop* (Sega Saturn, Sega), *Hi Octane* (Sega Saturn, Bullfrog), *Secret Of Evermore* (SNES, Nintendo), *Firestorm: Thunderhawk 2* (Sega Saturn, Core), *Warhawk* (PlayStation, Sony), *Killer Instinct* (Game Boy, Nintendo), *Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest* (SNES, Nintendo), *FIFA '96* (PlayStation), *Doom* (PlayStation, GT Interactive) and *Actua Soccer* (PC, Gremlin).

## JANUARY 1996 NEWS




9 January saw the debut on American television of *3rd Rock From The Sun*, a comedy about four alien beings who pose as a human family in order to observe human behaviour. Starring John Lithgow, Kristen Johnston and a young Joseph Gordon-Levitt, the award-winning hit show ran for 139 episodes through six series over a five-year period.

12 January saw the release of a film that deserved to go straight in the bin. *Lawnmower Man 2: Beyond Cyberspace* was a follow-up to the 1992 original which itself wasn't particularly well received. The second movie was an unadulterated pile of guff from start to finish. A ridiculous story with CGI seemingly created on a Sinclair Spectrum led to an obvious conclusion; critics and cinemagoers universally panned it. 19 January saw the world premiere of *From Dusk Till Dawn* directed by Robert Rodriguez and starring George Clooney and Quentin Tarantino. It follows the story of two brothers on the run from the FBI after a bank robbery. They take a family of three hostage and head to Mexico. After successfully crossing the border, the brothers and the family stop at a strip club called the Titty Twister where the patrons transform into vampires and a battle of survival ensues. Cue buckets of blood and exploding bodies.

28 January saw the passing of writer Jerry Siegel, co-creator of the comic book superhero *Superman*. Detective Comics (later becoming DC) bought the rights to *Superman* in 1938 and with that the superhero genre had well and truly begun.

## THIS MONTH IN...

### COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES



*Virtua Fighter 2* for the Sega Saturn was reviewed scoring a massive 97 per cent and little wonder, it was superb. This was highlighted by the *VF2* pre-order news from Japan where estimations were one and a half million units. Coincidentally, that was almost exactly the number of Saturn owner's in Japan.




### SUPER PLAY



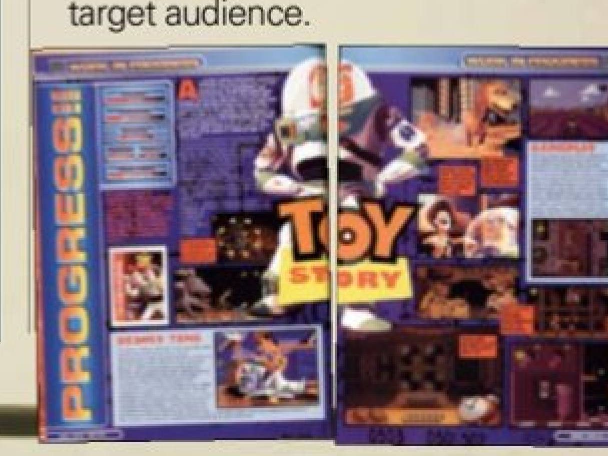
Tucked away in a corner of *Super Play* was a review of *Retrogamer*, a new fanzine by Keith Ainsworth covering classic computer games and systems. Super Play described it as a worthwhile read particularly as the retro gaming scene was largely ignored by the professional press. Not much change there then.




### MEAN MACHINES SEGA



A preview of the new *Toy Story* game based on the Pixar movie featured and graphically it looked bang on. However, the result wasn't great; an insipid scrolling platform game with nice graphics that followed the movie storyline but was far too hard for its young target audience.




RICE
10
GUN POD
ENEMY
ATTAC

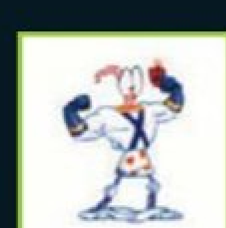
RETROBATE PROFILE

» **NAME:** JAMES EVANS
» **JOINED:** 5 AUG 2011
» **LOCATION:** MANCHESTER
» **OCCUPATION:** RETAIL
» **FAVE GAME SYSTEM:** SUPER NES

# Metal Marine

IQ, ROBOT

#60



» SUPER NES
» NAMCO
» 1984

**You are the equivalent of the Japanese space army, taking the fight to the evil Westerners… Obviously, for disclaimer reasons, that is not how the story is told, but if you have an ounce of intelligence in your head, that is basically the story… A futuristic Pearl Harbour with robots!**

*Metal Marine* is actually an involved strategy game with a plethora of options to keep you busy. The screen looks like an isometric *Command & Conquer* – build icons are all neatly laid out on the left of the screen, the action on the right. A slight warning – the game is in real time, your factories earn money and this money buys stuff. Same applies to the enemy. Before you know it, the alarm sounds and the action cuts to the enemy assault. Your base defences respond to the attack that approaches, be it anti-air missiles to turrets and even giant mech attacks.

Best thing to do is go straight on the attack, fire off some missiles to get a scope on the enemy base – it works like *Battleships*, you pick a grid area on the enemy's map and use trial and error until you find where the command centres are positioned. Then send in the ground troops to level the place. If you save up enough cash/energy (each missile/mech costs fuel so you need to get building those factories) you can eventually buy nuclear missiles that lay waste to huge areas.

An absolute gem of a game, even if it does have casual racism (my opinion, of course) but it's all tongue-in-cheek stuff. Bright bold anime characters act out the scenes between the action to keep you entertained and it does not disappoint. The only downside to the game is the music – it does the job and sets the scene, but it is on a constant loop between building and attacks.

Getting much harder and more expensive to get hold of a copy these days, *Metal Marine* is definitely worth a look.

Want to appear in the magazine?

**Be sure to upload your classic profiles at www.retrogamer.net**



# 30 YEARS OF DRAGON'S LAIR

**Cinematronic's Dragon's Lair remains one of the most iconic arcade games of all time and has been released for almost every computer and console platform under the sun. As Dragon's Lair celebrates its 30th anniversary, Martyn Carroll unravels the tangled history of Dirk's most daring adventure**

**D*ragon's Lair* is the most divisive of games. For some, it doesn't even deserve to be called a game, as it's essentially an interactive movie where the player does little more than prod Dirk away from danger. For others, the title alone is enough to excite the synapses and whisk them back to 1983 when goggle-eyed gamers bumped and jostled to get a glimpse of this extravagant new game that featured cartoon-quality sound and animation. For those amazed by the attract mode, amused by Dirk's screams and confused by Daphne's one-piece when the game first arrived in arcades 30 years ago, there will always be something special – magical, even – about *Dragon's Lair*.**

While fans are quick to argue that *Dragon's Lair* is more than just a movie, the title has certainly benefited from the type of bonus material you'd find attached to treasured films. Releases on CD, DVD and more recently HD-DVD and Blu-ray have featured mini-documentaries and interviews with the creators along with deleted scenes and other extras. As such, the story of how *Dragon's Lair* came together is rather well known, but it's worth recapping simply because the game's origins are so surprisingly primitive.

The concept was first developed by Rick Dyer in 1979. Having quit his job at Mattel, where he developed handheld LCD games, Rick set up Advanced Micro Computers in San Diego. Working out of his garage, he created a fantasy-themed adventure game that used a roll of cash register paper as its 'display'. On the paper Rick added various scenes, each with a hand-drawn picture and a text description. The player would choose their desired multiple-choice option and the computer would quickly spin the roll to display the required scene.

Rick went on to replace the paper roll with a strip of film, then added sound via a tape recorder, and later still transferred his adventure game to a LaserDisc. This new technology allowed him to randomly and almost seamlessly jump between scenes, but he was still using static images. The whole thing was a bit flat. He needed to breathe life into it, and having seen the animated feature *The Secret Of NIMH* at the cinema, he knew who he wanted to do just that.

*The Secret Of NIMH* was the first film from LA-based Don Bluth Productions, the studio formed by Don Bluth, Gary Goldman and John Pomeroy following their well-publicised resignation from Walt Disney Productions. Life as an indie was hard however. *NIMH* opened to limited success in June 1982 and production of the second film was derailed by industry-wide strike action. ▶



Picking up the story, Gary Goldman says: "We suffered a union strike at the end of July. Our crew of about 110 artists and technicians were reluctantly escorted from the studio. That strike lasted 73 days and during that time, our investors, concerned about the ramifications to the budget, decided to back out. Don, John, our production manager, our receptionist and I were the only ones left in the building. We thought our company was done. Two months into the strike we were contacted by Rick Dyer. He came to the studio and pitched his idea of us partnering with him to make an animated LaserDisc arcade game. He had seen *The Secret Of NIMH* with his wife and told her that we had to be the ones to produce the animation. So, even though we didn't really know anything about games, we agreed to join him in the adventure – videogames were not in union contract at that time. There was a sigh of relief among us regarding our destiny as a company."

Relief quickly turned to panic as team Bluth had just 16 weeks to create something that could be demonstrated at the Amusement Operators Expo being held in Chicago in March 1983. Rick Dyer knew that other companies were developing LaserDisc games so they needed to be first to market, in the US at least. That frantic four month period witnessed the creation of Dirk the bumbler, Daphne the beauty, the castle, the quest, the pitfalls and pratfalls. Hundreds of ideas were turned into thousands of drawings as *Dragon's Lair* came to life.

March arrived and the team had three scenes (or 'rooms') ready to show off at the expo. And show off they did. "We couldn't believe it," says Gary. "*Dragon's Lair* became a national name. All the news stations across the nation reported on the convention, showing colour footage of the gameplay. The distributor, Cinematronics, was able to pre-sell more than 3,500 units of the unfinished game. All of the costs for production, programming and game cabinet construction and shipping were paid for with advances on those sales."



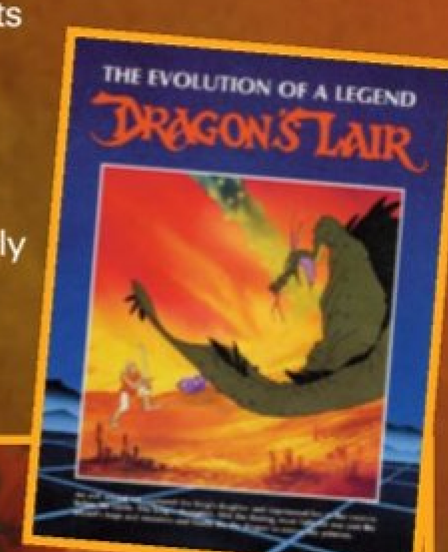
» [Arcade] Could someone give me a hand here?

## READERS REMEMBER

■ "I first saw it in the arcade that was tacked onto the side of my local Odeon cinema. I was utterly blown away by it. I must have stood there and watched that attract sequence about 20 times and knew the voiceover off by heart. I didn't play it because it was expensive and I wanted to buy sweets, so at that point it was the best game ever too me. Obviously when I did eventually play it I realised otherwise, but for a while that game was just magical."

**THE LAIRD**

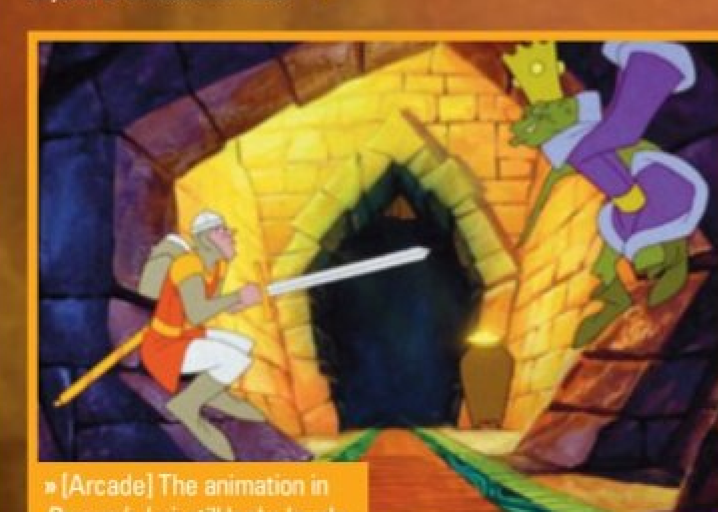
Reaction to the game was unanimously positive. A typical viewpoint appeared in the July 1983 issue of *Video Games Magazine*. "The 1983 AOE offered very little we haven't all seen before," reported John Holmstom on the expo. "Most of the new games were variations on recognisable and overused themes which aren't going to shake up many arcades. Only one game stood out from the rest – *Dragon's Lair*. It's such a revolutionary concept that it will undoubtedly cause a great deal of excitement in the arcades. It could ultimately make the other games at the show seem like mere antiques."




Buoyed by the success and with completion costs covered, the team returned to California to finish work on the game. In total the project would feature around 20 minutes of hand-drawn animation. "We completed it in May," continues Gary. "Rick Dyer started testing it in arcade situations, making changes and excluding rooms that didn't entertain or confused the players. He also tweaked the programming 'event' windows – the amount of time allowed to make your move. The game started shipping to arcades in early July, selling in excess of 8,000 machines."



» Creators of a legend. From left to right: Don Bluth, Rick Dyer and Gary Goldman.



» [Arcade] The animation in *Dragon's Lair* still looks lovely.

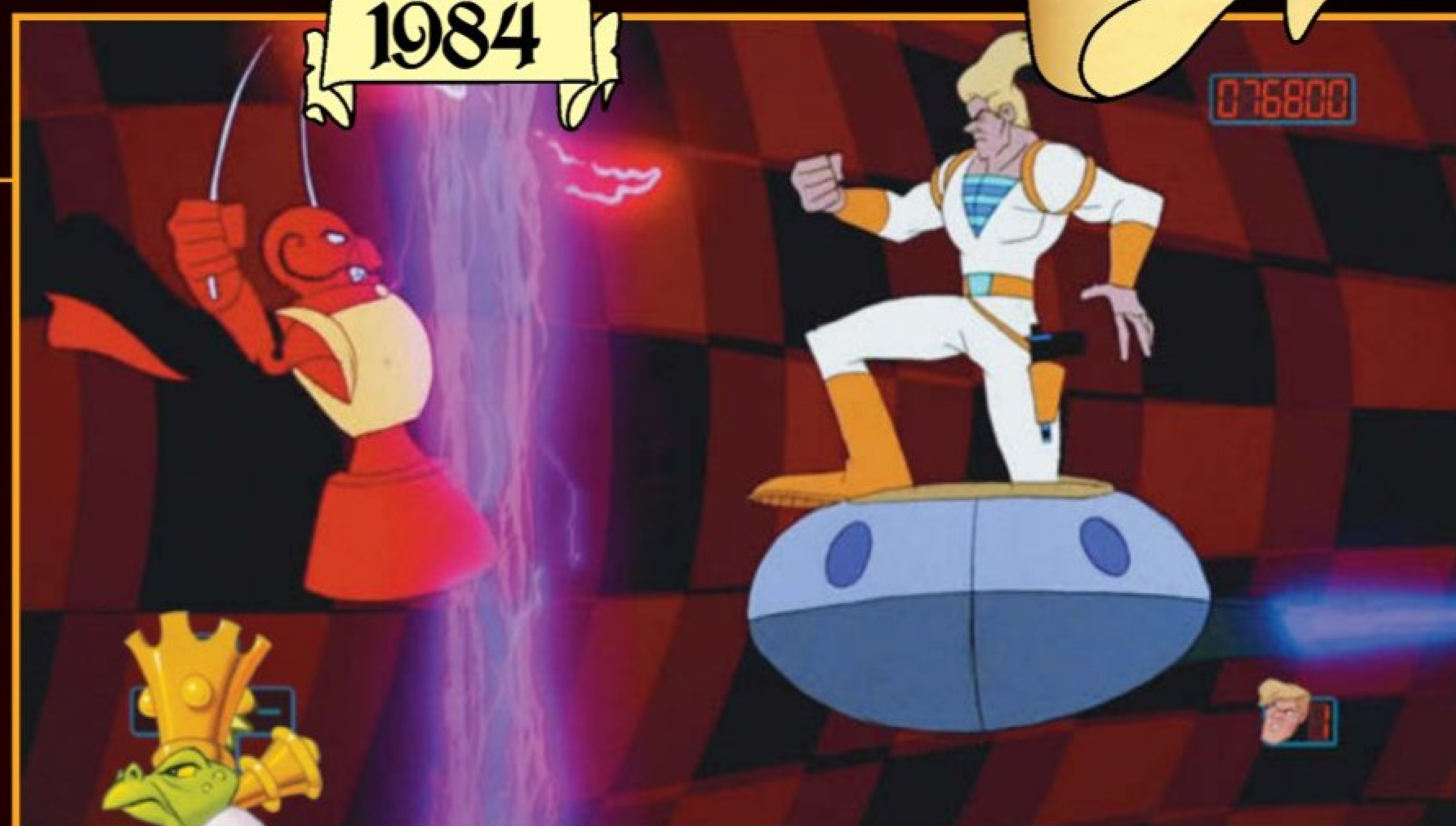


» [Arcade] Poor old Dirk faced all sorts of deadly encounters.

# Dragon's Spawn

**Sequels to – and spin-offs from – the original arcade game**

1984




## SPACE ACE (Arcade)

■ This delightful follow-up to *Dragon's Lair* is faster (it's relentless) and funnier (thanks to the introduction of dialogue). Branching paths and varying skill levels increase replay value. It's regularly bundled with the *Dragon's Lair* arcade games, creating a loose trilogy.

1990




## DRAGON'S LAIR (NES)

■ Elite's first attempt at dropping Dirk into a platform game was a disaster. The character graphics are detailed and large, but the animation is sluggish and the controls are clunky. The difficulty level is crazy; you deserve a medal for finishing the first screen.



1991



## DRAGON'S LAIR (GB)

■ Subtitled *The Legend*, this handheld spin-off is a straight rip of Spectrum platformer *Roller Coaster*, also by Elite. It helps that the source is a brilliant little game, but no real effort has been made to link the game to the *Dragon's Lair* world. Bizarre.

1991



## DRAGON'S LAIR II (Arcade)

■ This belated sequel arrived in arcades seven years late – and it was probably seven years *too* late. For fans though there's real magic at work here. The animation is top drawer, with proceedings taking a surreal turn as Dirk is whisked through time.

1993



## DRAGON'S LAIR (SNES)

■ Third time lucky for Elite. This platformer is hardly groundbreaking, particularly within the SNES library, but it's polished and engaging and lots of fun. It's challenging too, though fair, and there are plenty of nods to the original arcade game to spot.

2002



## DRAGON'S LAIR 3D (Multi)

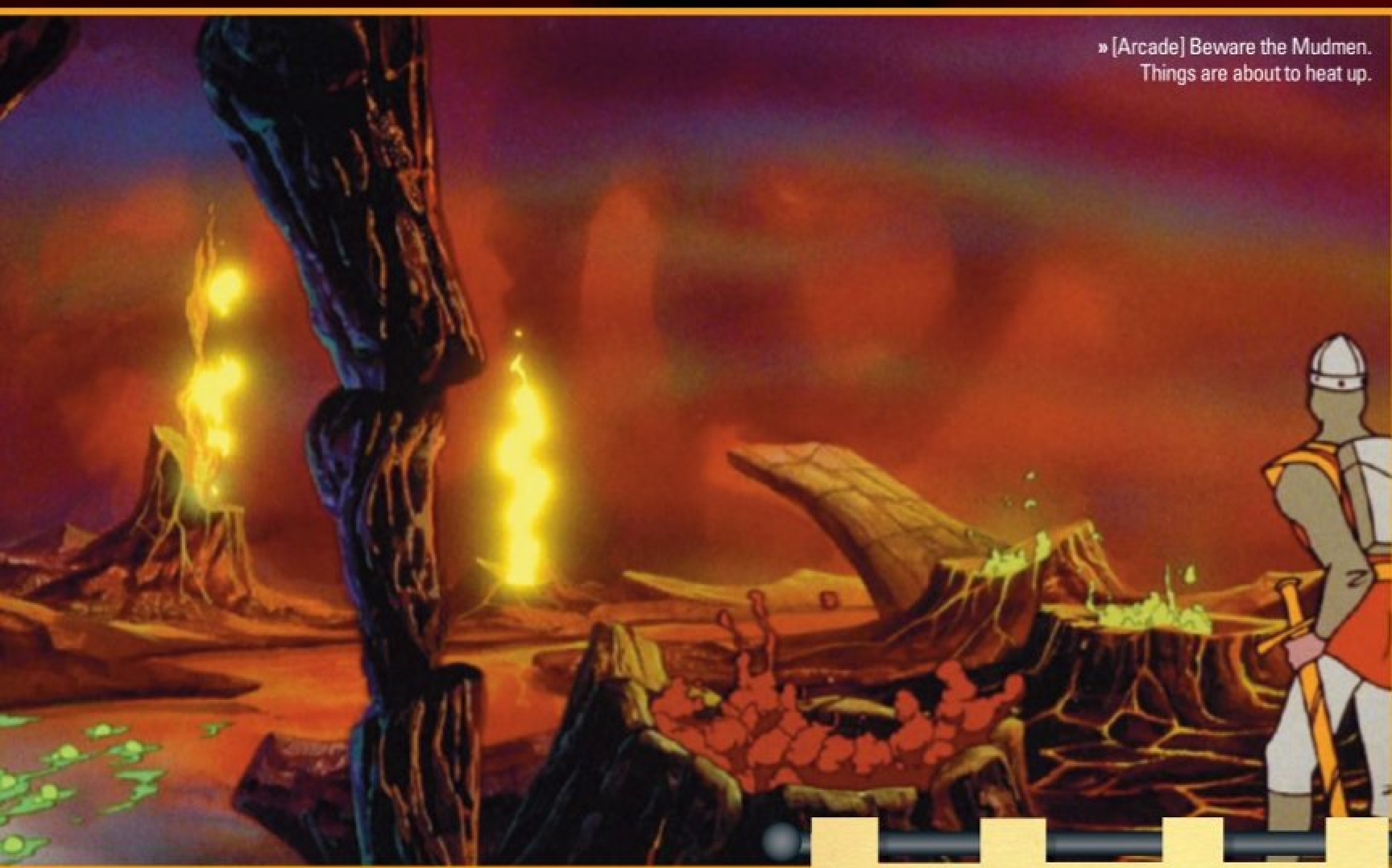
■ Part sequel, part update, this return to the world of *Dragon's Lair* is not unwelcome. It plays it safe, adopting the typical action-adventure-platformer approach, but the cel-shaded visuals are spot-on and the animation is authentic. A 'nice' game.

2004



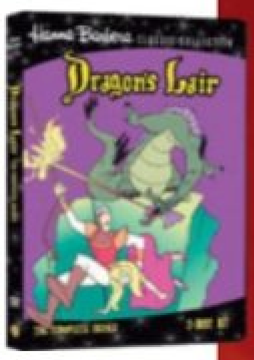
## DRAGON'S LAIR III (PC)

■ Mark this as a failed experiment. It's basically *Dragon's Lair 3D* turned into an interactive movie so that the gameplay matches that of the original. A definite whiff of 'Why bother?' makes this one for completionists, or possibly masochists.



» [Arcade] Beware the Mudmen. Things are about to heat up.

## CARTOON TIME




■ Cartoon serials based on hit videogames have occupied Saturday morning TV schedules for years, stretching right back to the early Eighties. *Dragon's Lair* was a better fit than most, being based on a game that actually boasted traditional animation itself. Ruby-Spears Productions developed 13 episodes that were initially broadcast on the American ABC network between September 1984 and April 1985.

In each 30-minute show, Dirk (who now spoke rather than just shrieked) would rescue Daphne or protect the kingdom from Singe the dragon and his conniving cronies. The animation was adequate, the stories were diverting and the whole thing was good fun – providing you were eight years old. Co-creator Gary Goldman singles out the series as the one the main reasons why *Dragon's Lair* remained in the public consciousness long after the game's popularity had cooled in the arcades.



The show has been re-run several times on US television over the years and in 2011 Warner Bros released the complete series on Region 1 DVD.

During that summer of '83 it seemed that everyone was playing – or at least standing in line waiting to play – *Dragon's Lair*. It was massively popular. Operators plonked TVs on top of machines so that punters could more easily watch the game being played. The fact that it cost twice as much to play as other machines (fifty cents per credit in the US, rather than the usual quarter, to cover the increased outlay for the LaserDisc technology) didn't dampen the enthusiasm.

"We were awestruck," admits Gary. "Not only by the results of the Chicago convention preview, but by visiting the arcades in the LA area. It was kind of crazy, seeing the crowds around the machine. We were invited to come to The Largest Arcade in the World in Denver, Colorado, where they had the game, spot lit, all alone, separated from the other games with a red carpet and gold-coloured ropes for the players to line up to play. They had put three TV monitors on the top of the arcade allowing the crowds of kids to watch the action from several directions. There were at least 75 to 100 players standing in line waiting to play. It was like the lines to see *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*."

### READERS REMEMBER

■ "I remember seeing it when I was but a youngster and being amazed at the graphics (compared to anything else in the arcade at the time). The kid I was watching must have played it to death, as it seemed I was watching a full cartoon. I thought it was easy. I popped my coins in and lasted about ten seconds… Didn't play it much after that."

**NOKGOD**

One of those waiting impatiently in the line for *Dragon's Lair* was Jeff Kinder. "I was on vacation with my family in Wildwood, New Jersey," says Jeff, who years later would establish a *Dragon's Lair* website. "As I walked around an arcade I noticed a huge crowd around one of the games. A TV that was sitting on top of the machine and when I saw the screen I said to myself 'That's nice, they're showing cartoons on the TV'. When I finally edged through the crowd and saw that those cartoons were actually part of the game I just couldn't believe it. My jaw hit the floor. After waiting 15 minutes for my turn, my game lasted about 15 seconds. But I was hooked."



Someone else clamouring to play was Martin Touhey. Spellbound by the game as a wide-eyed nine-year-old, he's currently putting together a feature-length documentary entitled *Inside The Dragon's Lair*. "I walked into the arcade one day and a crowd of people were all huddled around this one game," he says. "My young brain could barely even comprehend what was going on. Two of my favourite things, animation and videogames, coming together in such harmony that it felt like a wish come true. I was in a state of euphoria and I hadn't even played the game yet. Once I did get to play the game, however, it did to me what it did to many other gamers – it took my fifty cents and killed me quickly. My attraction wasn't diminished though. It was such a different concept at the time that there was no way I could ever forget it."

The game was a success for all parties involved. Don Bluth Productions, who initially viewed *Dragon's Lair* as a stop gap between movie projects, ploughed the

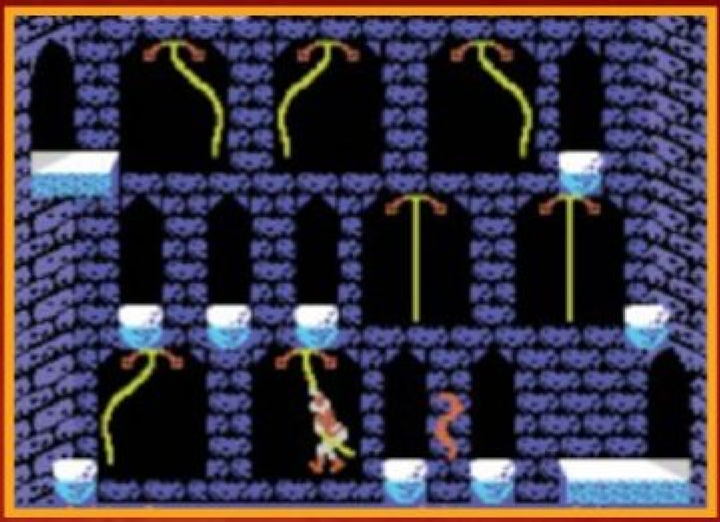


» [Adam] Despite the limitations of the platform, this remained an impressive conversion that captured the spirit of the original game.



» [Arcade] At least when you die you're rewarded with a funny fatality scene. Get used to it as you'll see it often.

» [Adam] Coleco's original *Dragon's Lair* adaptation for its Adam home computer.



» [Amiga] Against the odds, the Commodore Amiga version delivered an authentic *Dragon's Lair* experience.





» [Arcade] *Dragon's Lair* may have had simple gameplay, but it looked amazing.

profits into videogame development. Its second LaserDisc game, the sci-fi romp *Space Ace*, arrived in 1984 and this was followed by a *Dragon's Lair* sequel. Gary says: "The money flowed and the profits funded *Space Ace* and 70 per cent of *Dragon's Lair II*." 70 per cent? In March 1984, distributor Cinematronics pulled the plug on the sequel despite it being close to completion. It appeared that the novelty of LaserDisc games had rapidly worn off and their popularity was on the wane. The craze was short-lived and it pretty much began and ended with *Dragon's Lair*. Yet the game's legacy was to live on.

Hit coin-ops end up in the home and *Dragon's Lair* was no different, despite it being impossible to convert the game to the computers and consoles of the time with any degree of accuracy.

Mere insurmountable tasks weren't about to stop Coleco however. The manufacturer was planning an add-on module for its ColecoVision console that would play CED discs (effectively vinyl records that stored video). *Dragon's Lair* was the perfect killer app for this new kit and Coleco reportedly stumped up $2m to licence the game. Unsurprisingly, plans for this ambitious add-on were soon scrapped and Coleco was forced to adapt rather than convert the game. The result was a multi-load affair for its Adam computer that featured scaled-down versions or rather interpretations of popular scenes from the original. The game was released in 1984 and available on both cassette (that cleverly pre-loaded the next level while you were playing the current one) and floppy disk.

The Adam was not a popular computer, so it was left to UK firm Software Projects to give Coleco's version greater exposure. Software Projects boss Alan Maton picked up the Adam version while on holiday in France and brought it back to show his team in Liverpool. "Software Projects had the Adam version and we were all looking at it," recalls in-house programmer John Darnell. "I had written a Commodore 64 turbo loader and saw that just as the Adam loaded the next level from tape whilst playing the game, the C64 could potentially do the same. 'Go for it,' said Alan. 'We will sort out the copyright issues.' And so that's what we did! Writing *Dragon's Lair* for the C64 was an absolute blast."

John's C64 version was released in late 1986, with Spectrum and Amstrad CPC versions following a few months later. Review scores were so-so, with many critics bemoaning the game's tough-as-boots difficulty level, but the allure of *Dragon's Lair* was still strong and the game was a solid chart hit. In 1987 Software Projects created a fresh set of levels based on arcade scenes not featured in the Adam original and released it on C64, Spectrum and CPC as *Dragon's Lair Part II: Escape From Singe's Castle*. A 'new' plot involved Dirk venturing back into the castle to steal some of Singe's gold – presumably to keep Princess Daphne in the pre-kidnap lifestyle she was accustomed to.

In 1988, Randy Linden and David Foster of US publisher ReadySoft acquired the rights. Their plan was admirably bold – to release a faithful version of *Dragon's Lair* for the Amiga computer. The lengthy process involved separating the foreground elements from scenes with static backgrounds and then reducing the colours used in these elements (to 16) and compressing them. Having minimised the data, they tackled the ▶

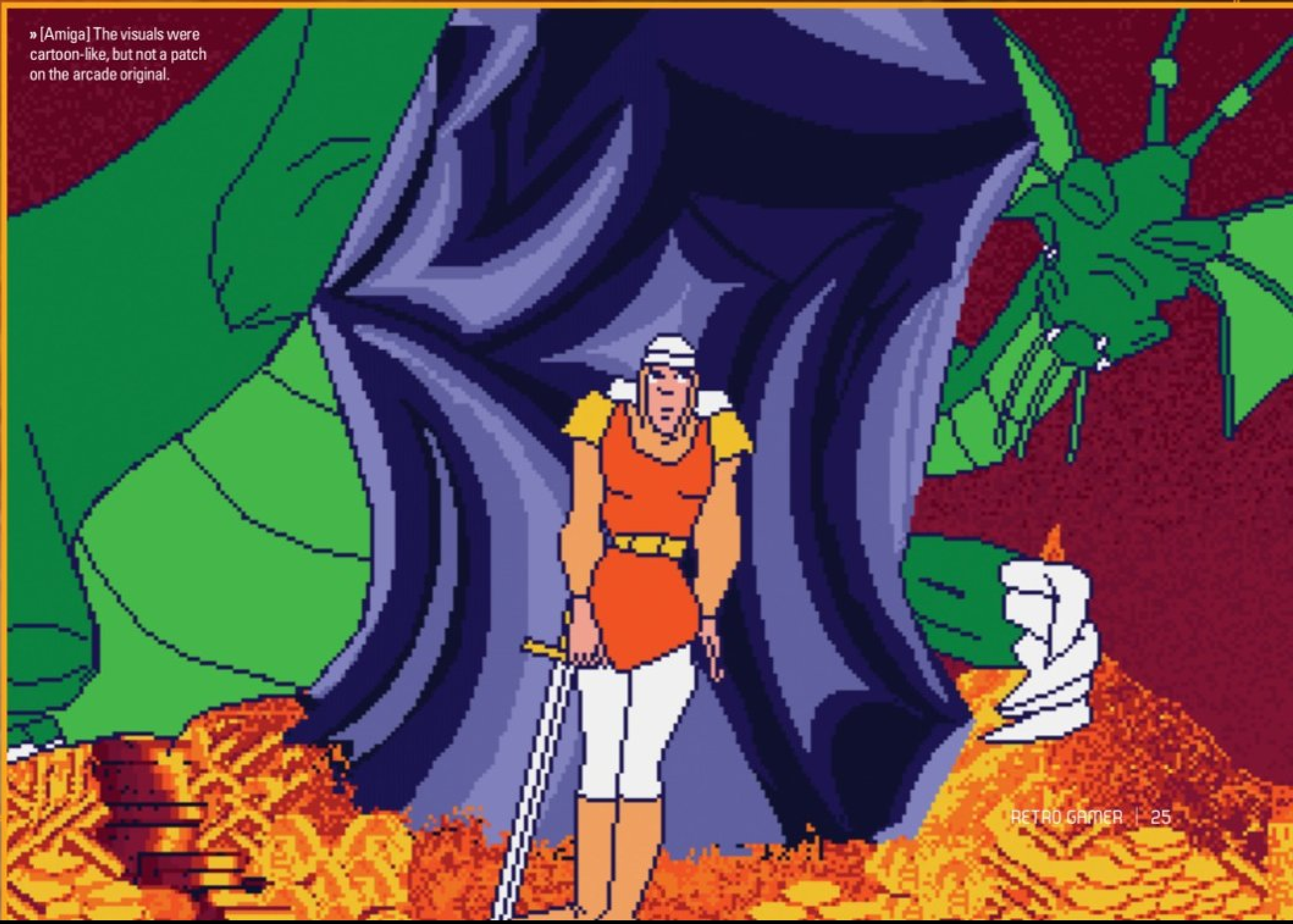
### READERS REMEMBER

■ "When this came out, I couldn't believe my eyes. It was expensive but I had to have a go. I died almost instantly and never played it again having felt utterly cheated out of my pocket money. I just watched everyone else waste their money instead!"

**FREDGHOSTMASTER**

> "WE FIRST RELEASED THE AMIGA VERSION AT THE WORLD OF COMMODORE EVENT AND WE HAD TO KEEP RUNNING BACK TO THE OFFICE TO GET MORE STOCK"
>
> READYSOFT'S DAVID FOSTER

» [Amiga] The visuals were cartoon-like, but not a patch on the arcade original.





» [Blu-Ray] *Dragon's Lair* was released on various high definition formats, meaning anything with a remote can play the iconic game.

challenge of optimising processor usage and maximising disk space. The finished product shipped on six full-to-the-brim floppy disks and yet featured just 15 per cent of the arcade game.

It was a huge hit regardless. "We couldn't produce them fast enough to meet the demand," says David. "We first released the Amiga version at the World of Commodore event in Toronto in December 1988 and we had to keep running back to the office to get more stock. We ended up selling more than 1,000 units at the show alone. In the first three months we produced 60,000 units, times six disks each. We had a custom disk format designed to fit more data on each disk and also thwart piracy, so we were going flat out copying disks on reworked Amiga external drives with the rotation speed tuned down. The drives kept breaking down and we would have to keep buying new ones."

### READERS REMEMBER

■ "I was completely mesmerised by *Dragon's Lair* and loved the intro, but then again I was only around six or seven years old when I first saw it and never had the chance to play it. Back then I thought what I was seeing was actual game graphics rather than just stock footage running off a LaserDisc."

**TOXIEDOGG**

Following its successful debut on the Amiga, versions for the ST, PC and Mac were released. ReadySoft then converted a second set of scenes and, like Software Projects, released them with the subtitle *Escape From Singe's Castle*. For Dirk's return, ReadySoft introduced some player aids in the form of three difficulty levels, save game slots and clearer on-screen hints. "I think the helpers make the game much more accessible to casual gamers," says David. "We have found that most of our customers are interested in getting through the game and seeing all of the animation, bringing back the memories,



» [C64] Software Project captured the essence of *Dragon's Lair*, but not the visuals.

and not so much having to memorise all the exact moves and timings. We make sure that the helpers can be turned off for those interested in the true *Dragon's Lair* experience." The game also included several new scenes designed in-house at ReadySoft.

The brisk sales of these home versions demonstrated that *Dragon's Lair* still resonated with gamers. It wasn't too surprising then when interest was shown in the partially completed sequel. Leland Corporation approached the Bluth team and offered to finance the completion, and in 1991 *Dragon's Lair II: Time Warp* finally arrived in arcades. "I'm not sure

> "THE PHENOMENON IS THAT IT WAS A HISTORIC AND MEMORABLE MOMENT IN THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO SAW IT WHEN IT FIRST APPEARED IN THE ARCADES"
>
> CO-CREATOR GARY GOLDMAN

## DRAGON'S LEGACY

**Seven games that owe a debt of gratitude to Dragon's Lair**






### SUPER DON QUIX-OTE

■ Following the success of *Dragon's Lair*, a number of coin-op manufacturers flirted with LaserDisc tech. This was the first – and only – release from Japanese developer Universal. While the animation is far from Bluth standard, it's very similar to *Dragon's Lair* in story and execution. There's one difference however – the video display is overlaid with graphics showing your score, lives etc. Hints are also displayed, reducing instances of trial and error.

### COBRA COMMAND

■ Perhaps best known as an early Mega-CD FMV game, Data East's *Cobra Command* was actually released in arcades in 1984. Gameplay is a mix of shooting enemy craft and rapidly following directional commands which are relayed over the chopper's radio by your officer. The animation from the Toei studio is great and the action barely lets up for a second. Forms a fantastic double-bill with the 1985 car chase epic *Road Blaster* (*Road Avenger*).






### MAD DOG MCREE

■ This light-gun game sees you shooting no-good troublemakers in a Wild West town. Featuring video footage of real actors delivering terrible lines in hackneyed situations, the actual gameplay boils down to the reflexive type first introduced in *Dragon's Lair*. Enemies appear on the screen and if you're fast with your aim, they hit the dust. Too hesitant and it's a trip to Boot Hill for you. Very silly but fun nonetheless, particularly in the arcade with a crowd of mates rooting for you.



» [Arcade] Dirk's mother-in-law is not best pleased that Daphne has been kidnapped. Again.

what went into Leland's decision," says David, "but I would imagine that the home market success of *Dragon's Lair* played into it." Interestingly, the trailer to *Time Warp* displays the note 'Licensed exclusively to Nintendo', yet Gary cannot recall the Japanese firm being involved.

ReadySoft converted the arcade sequel to home computers, and was once again forced to leave many scenes out. Some of these unused scenes were picked up and used in a new release confusingly titled *Dragon's Lair III: The Curse Of Mordread*. As with *Escape From Singe's Castle*, this 'third' title included some exclusive new scenes to help make sense of the story. David says: "We needed a new beginning and ending when we went back and made subsequent versions based on the same material, so we made our own. I suspect that technically we did need approval for this and I'm not sure if that was ever requested or received, but I do recall that the Bluth Group was quite hands-off at the time. Its interest was in feature movies and the *Dragon's Lair* rights were a sideline."

It would appear that Don and his partners weren't too protective of the rights if Elite's trio of *Dragon's Lair* games for Nintendo consoles are anything to ▶

## READERS REMEMBER

■ "I saw it in Porthcawl and there were always big queues around it. There were two guys who were always on it and could complete it on one credit and it was probably the best game ever to a young me.

Because of that, I've got a weird fondness for *Dragon's Lair* and have picked up quite a lot of the home versions over the years. I actually quite like the SNES platformer, the original GB version is a decent version of *Roller Coaster* and I also really enjoyed *Dragon's Lair 3D* (which is what the original game should have been and might have been if they'd had the technology at the time) on the PS2."

**SHINOBI**





» [Arcade] *Dragon's Lair 2: Time Warp* saw Dirk constantly zipping through time.




» [CPC] Software Projects experienced much-needed success with its *Dragon's Lair* conversion.

## ANOTHER WORLD

■ Eric Chahi's 16-bit classic has more in common with *Dragon's Lair* than you may at first think. How do you escape the tentacles at the beginning of the game? You push up. How do you reach the teleporter at the end of the game? You push left. In addition, both games dwell rather lovingly on death, and perversely it's often fun to get killed in a variety of ways just so you can witness the inventive fatality sequences.





## BRAIN DEAD 13

■ Having spent a number of years successfully converting the *Dragon's Lair* games to home formats, ReadySoft put the ports on hold and developed this original interactive movie for home systems. Predictably the game borrows very heavily from *Dragon's Lair*, with the usual button prompts advancing the story, but the quirky animation and delightfully dark plot help the game stand on its own two feet. Also, as a bonus, some of the death scenes are bleakly hilarious.

## SHENMUE

■ It would be rather foolish to call Sega's *Shenmue* derivative outright, yet one of its key features – Quick-Time Events – can be traced directly back to *Dragon's Lair* and the other interactive movies of the era (via 1996's *Die Hard Arcade* which dabbled with timed button prompts during cutscenes). While *Shenmue*'s QTEs are just a small part of an innovative masterwork, some would argue that this 'feature' has been a blight on gaming ever since.





## HEAVY RAIN

■ Beautiful, tragic, compelling, exhilarating. It's easy to go overboard with the adjectives when discussing *Heavy Rain*, the stunning noir-inspired PS3 game from Quantic Dream. What's really amazing though is that the game, in which the player has no direct control over characters and the action is affected by timed events, shouldn't really work in this day in age. Yet it does, brilliantly, as proved by the game's wide critical claim and strong commercial success.

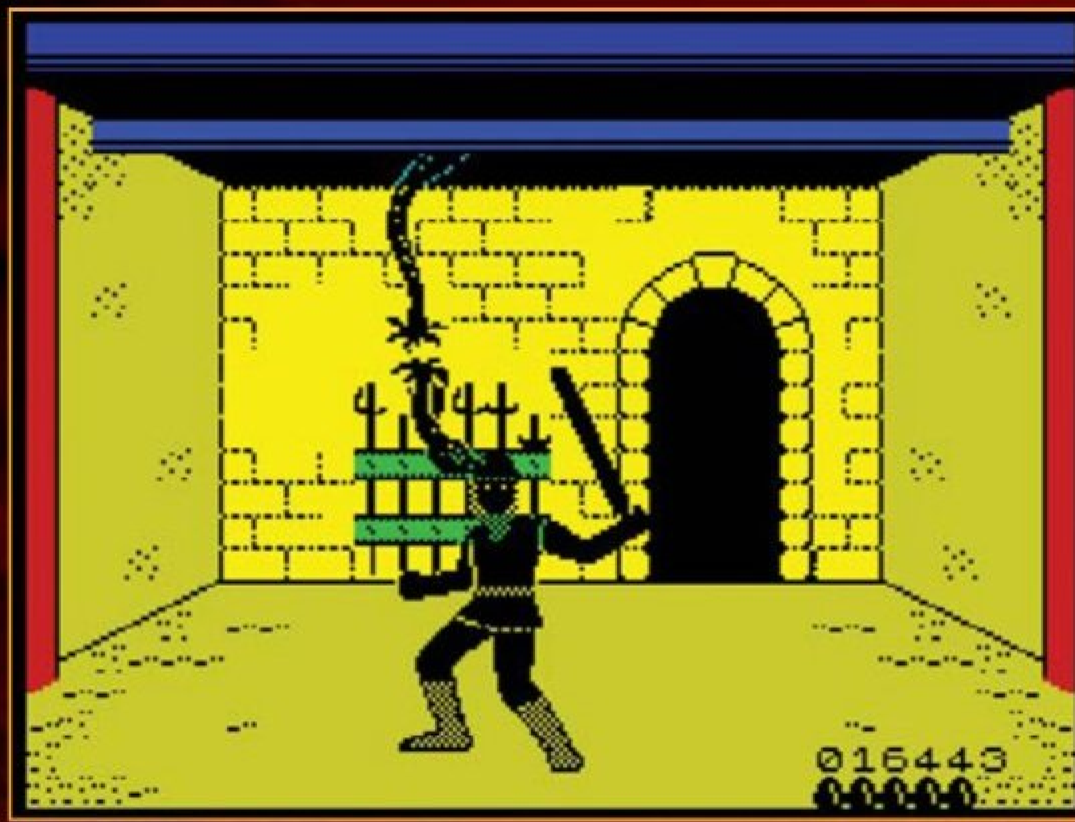
go by. The NES (1990), Game Boy (1991) and SNES (1993) releases were all platform games far removed from the arcade original. Much more faithful were the CD-ROM versions which ReadySoft rolled out from 1993 onwards. These finally provided PC and Mac users, as well as owners of jazzy CD-equipped consoles like the Mega-CD, CDi and 3DO, with the closest thing yet to the full arcade experience at home (if you excused the slightly ropey Cinepak-era video quality).

In 1997, Digital Leisure (the new name for ReadySoft) released versions with vastly improved video for CD and DVD. This year also saw the launch of Jeff Kinder's LaserDisc gaming website, which he initially created to document the restoration of a battered *Dragon's Lair* arcade machine that he'd bought. "I was so excited to finally be able to own one of my all-time favourite games," says Jeff about the machine. "Since the cabinet was in really bad shape, I figured I could rebuild the cabinet with new wood and restore it back to its original condition. As I worked on this project, I took pictures and put them on the internet to show others my progress. After a month or so, I started getting tons of emails from people commending my work and asking if I knew where they could find a *Dragon's Lair* machine or if I had any other information about the game or other LaserDisc games. Back in 1997 there was very little information about LaserDisc game on the internet, so I started doing research and making connections with people who had other games. Over a short period of time, many of these people started helping me and the popularity of the site really exploded."

*Dragon's Lair* was very much a product of the Eighties, yet its mysterious indefinable showed no sign of waning with the arrival of the new millennium. In 2001, Capcom published a surprisingly faithful version for the Game Boy Color, and then in 2002 Ubisoft readied an all-new Dirk adventure for PC and home consoles. Titled *Dragon's Lair 3D*, the gameplay was updated to give players direct control over Dirk, while the distinctive look of the original was replicated.

"We used source material from the original *Dragon's Lair* to help us apply the look to the 3D version," says project director and lead animator Thomas Konkol. "We were very lucky to have access to the original backgrounds and some animation cells." These were provided by the original co-creators who had a hand in the development. "They were very helpful in providing original art assets, giving us creative art direction, and on occasion, visiting the studio to assist and answer questions. I remember Don Bluth came by my office and looked at the 3D Daphne model I was creating and gave me very helpful advice on how to adjust her proportions to make the model look more like the 2D animated version."

In 2006 the focus returned to the original game with the first HD release from Digital Leisure. This proved to be painstaking work for David Foster and his team. He says: "We went back to the original film that had been in a vault for 20 years and had it transferred to a digital format in




» [Spectrum] This version was started by Derrick Rowson and finished by Paul Hodgson and Andy Walker.

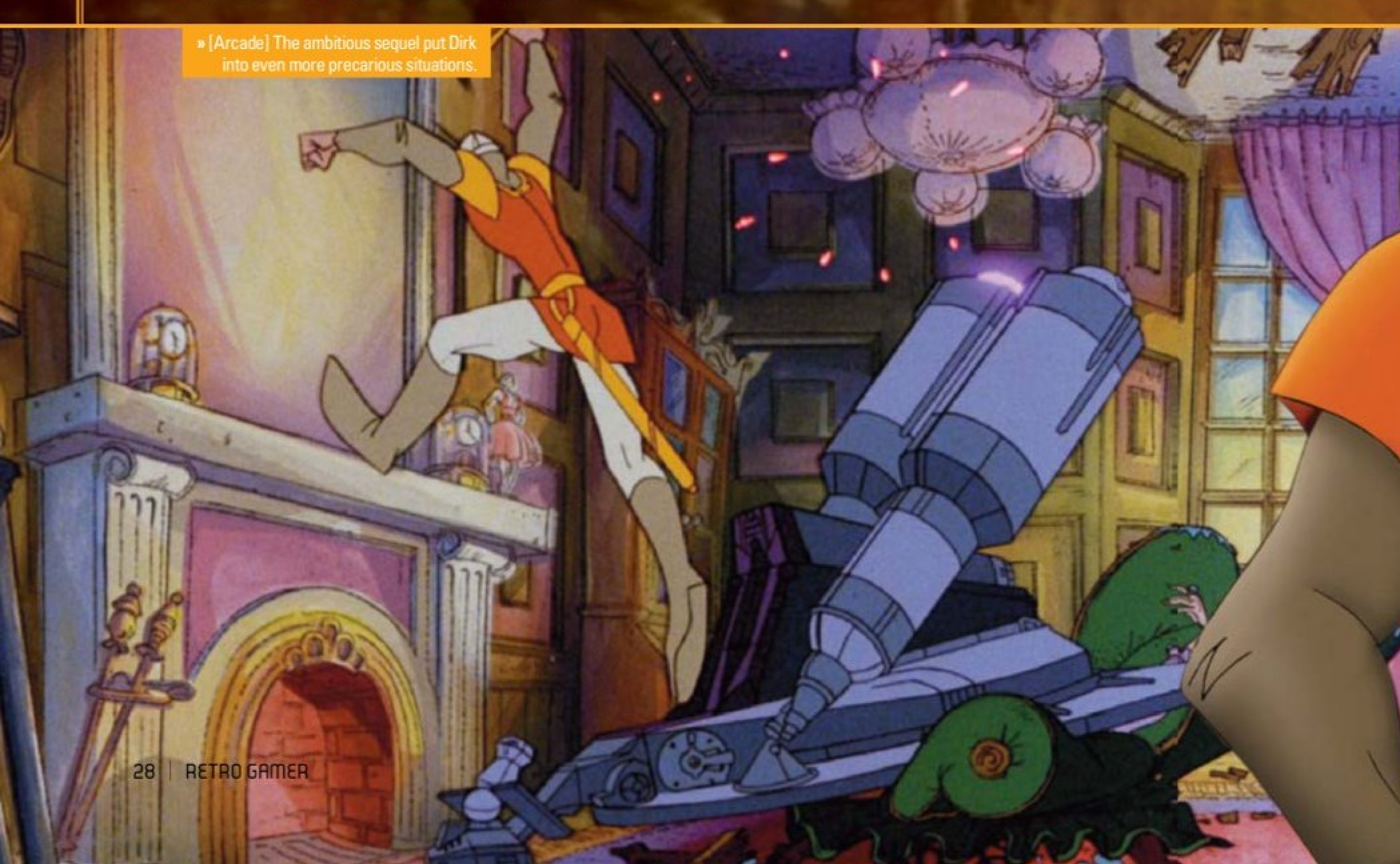
## READERS REMEMBER

■ "One of the video rental shops in town had a bunch of arcade machines, and one day I was there I saw this amazing game people were crowding around. It was truly a thing of beauty, and I dearly want that *Dragon's Lair* film to happen."

**NORTHWAY**

## "THERE WERE AT LEAST 75 TO 100 PLAYERS STANDING IN LINE WAITING TO PLAY. IT WAS LIKE THE LINES TO SEE RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK"

CO-CREATOR GARY GOLDMAN



» [Arcade] The ambitious sequel put Dirk into even more precarious situations.





» [iOS] Constant conversions over the years has ensured *Dragon's Lair* continues to strike a chord with gamers.

HD. Although it was great resolution it showed up all kinds of dust, hair and other artefacts that weren't particularly visible in SD but were glaring in HD. So we ended up spending six month doing hand touch-up on a frame-by-frame basis to tidy up the video, but we ultimately had a much cleaner version which looked great in HD."

This HD print has been used in subsequent releases for many platforms including Wii, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, iOS and Android. So what next for the original *Dragon's Lair*? A 3D version? A 4K version? "We always have *Dragon's Lair* plans in the pipeline," says David. "However, we're sticking with the core game. We've discovered that this is what fans want the most. If a *Dragon's Lair* feature film was ever produced then there might be interest in a movie-themed version of the game."

Talk of a *Dragon's Lair* movie has circulated for many years. Over to Gary Goldman: "It's still on our list of feature films we want to make. We've probably done twelve rewrites on the script. It isn't about the game. It's the backstory about Dirk, Daphne, their history. It's a prequel to the game."

## READERS REMEMBER

■ "I saw a massive crowd around a machine, and once I fought my way to the front I saw the most spectacular game I'd ever seen! Literally a cartoon! If only it wasn't so ruthlessly difficult I'd have played it. I also think it was the first ever game that cost 50p a credit. Shocking in the days of 10p machines!"

**FREESTYLER**

The polarising effect of *Dragon's Lair* might be the reason why a question mark hangs over the movie. But then, even those that hate the game and wish they'd never wasted a single credit on it must surely appreciate its groundbreaking impact and admire its 30 year legacy.

"It's the animation," says Gary, when asked about the game's timeless appeal. "It's well executed and still entertaining, even to the children of those who played it during the Eighties. It's not a great game, it's a memory game. I think the phenomenon is that it was a historic and memorable moment in the lives of those who saw it when it first appeared in the arcades. It's one of those first-time experiences that takes place at an impressionable age, like going to see your first animated film in a theatre. It scars the brain and you remember it forever, especially if you were entertained by it and everyone your age was talking about it.

"We know that there are still plenty of fans out there. We continue to receive mail from fans expressing their gratitude and inspiration to seek a career in animation. That's pretty amazing."





» [GameCube] The cel-shaded visuals in *Dragon's Lair 3D* clearly evoke the original game.

# INSIDE THE DRAGON'S LAIR

### We chat to director Martin Touhey about his upcoming Dragon's Lair documentary

**Why did you decide to document *Dragon's Lair*?**

*Dragon's Lair* had a significant impact on my life. It's stuck with me like glue for decades. I felt that by having a subject that I was personally attached to would benefit a documentary. Not only was *Dragon's Lair* a personal favourite of mine, but it was also a very interesting subject to tackle. There are very few games out there that have had the same kind of longevity. *Dragon's Lair* was also a game that had many 'firsts'. The animation angle alone was really enough to warrant a documentary about the game.

**How is the project progressing?**

The project is coming along quite nicely. We've interviewed about 20 people so far including animators Don Bluth and Gary Goldman. We're still in production and will be launching a Kickstarter campaign to help with the additional production costs as well as post-production. As it stands right now the release date of the film is up in the air, but we're shooting for the first part of 2014.

**The various home releases over the years have included documentaries and interviews with the creators. Why should fans check out your documentary?**

I've seen the mini-docs and interviews, but what I find missing from them is a solid compelling narrative. We want to create a film that tells a story that everyone can appreciate and enjoy, not just *Dragon's Lair* fans. It's all about creating a film with a narrative and if you have all the right elements in place and they're hitting on all cylinders then you'll end up with a film that's greater than the sum of its parts. So far all I've seen out there is parts.



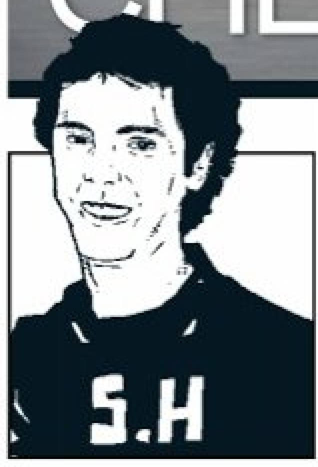

**You can follow the documentary's progress on Twitter (@dragonslairdoc) and Facebook (facebook.com/dragonslairdoc).**



» Documentary director Martin Touhey, at Don Bluth's house (photo by Justin Maine).

CLASSIC GAMING FOR UNDER A FIVER

# CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learnt about retro gaming, it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you really want it to. Granted, a mint copy of is going to cost you a small fortune to procure, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can be picked up for less than five English pounds…

## TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES



### INFO

- » **SYSTEM:** NES
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** C64, ZX SPECTRUM, CPC, AMIGA, ST, MSX, PC
- » **RELEASED:** 1989
- » **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE



» [NES] The bane of the entire game for some, the infamous dam level – those turtles can fight, but they can't swim for toffee.

**Seeing Konami plastered on the box, those NES owners expecting a cut-back version of the developer's super popular side-scrolling *Final Fight* take on the *Ninja Turtles* franchise probably felt some disappointment when they realised this wasn't that game (though they did go on to receive a conversion of the coin-op in the form of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2: The Arcade Game*), but *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* isn't without merit. And having seen *The Wizard* a few times, we're sure Christian Slater and Beau Bridges would agree.**

That bloody frustrating dam stage aside (and a few other instances of poor level design that crop up throughout the game), we argue that this *Turtles* videogame plays closer to the animated television show than any other, and here's why. Each level, of which there are six, plays out like a mini cartoon episode: the first stage sees the boys rescuing yellow-clad reporter April O'Neil; another finds them in a desperate race to disarm a bunch of computer terminals underwater to prevent a dam from blowing up; and then there's another that sees the heroes in a half shell rescuing their ratty master Splinter from their nasty nemesis Shredder.

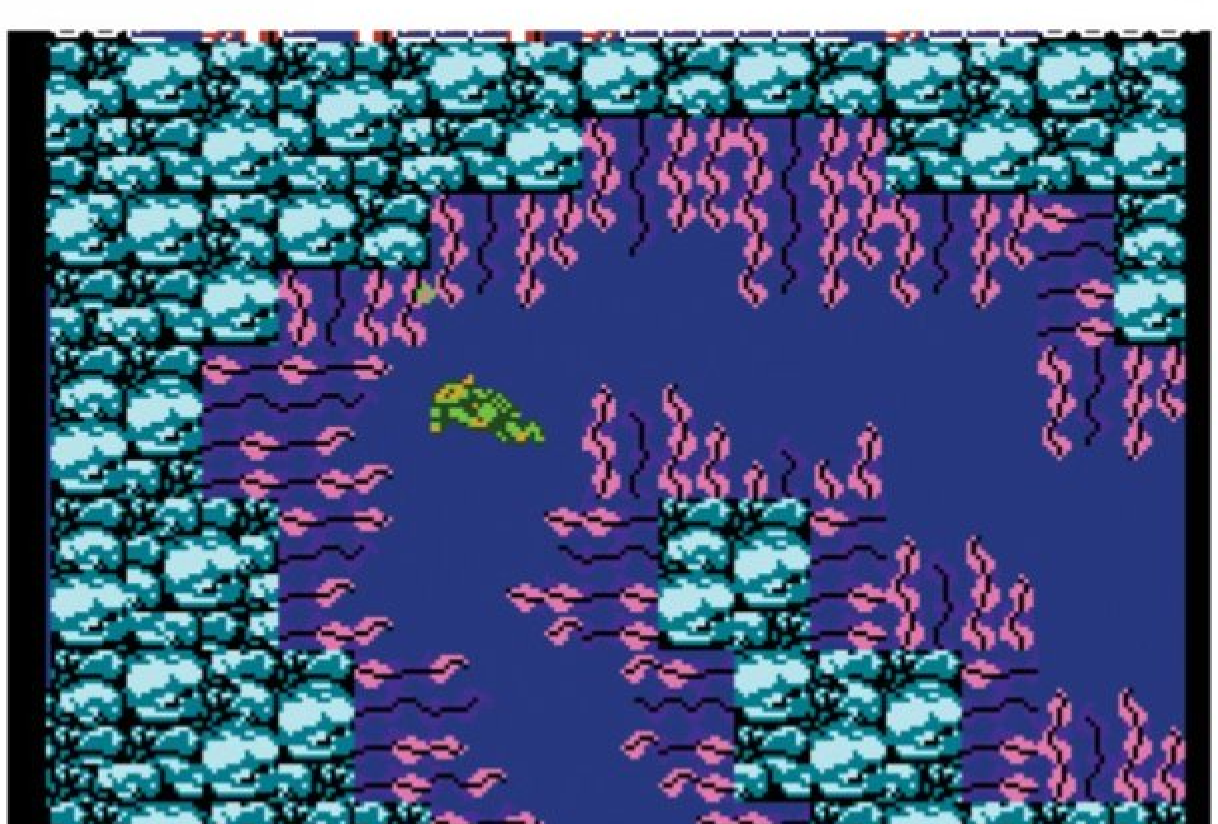


» [NES] The presentation and fan service in the game is impressive, heck you even got to drive around in the Turtle Wagon! Cowabunga!!

Also, even if playing solo you're forced to make use of all four turtles to complete the game: either to make use of their different weapons (Donatello's Bo is very handy for clobbering enemies on above platforms, while Michelangelo's nunchucks are perfect for bashing those positioned below, or to simply spread out the enemy attacks to prevent one from getting killed. Each turtle represents a life, and this adds a bit of strategy to the gameplay as you can tag a fresh face into the battle whenever one is looking a little bit peaky.

*TMNT* also has loads of elements and characters taken from the television show, enemies like the foot clan, Bebop and Rocksteady appear, as do vehicles like the Turtle Wagon, Turtle Blimp and the Technodrome. The whole aspect of the turtles being sewer dwellers and rarely doing their heroism in the public eye (despite the fact they're friends with a popular anchorwoman) is also touched on in the game. Levels are split into two different sections. The first takes the form of an overworld maze-style map featuring buildings and open sewers and to get around you must enter them, and when you do this the game's perspective switches to a side-scrolling action platformer.

As both the turtles and the NES were pretty popular in the West, copies of the game aren't hard very find nor expensive. Usually selling from between a few quid up to a tenner, it might sit in the shadow of the classic coin-op, but in terms of capturing the feel of the show it's still an impressive title.







### NINJA POWER

Other games with ninja in the title

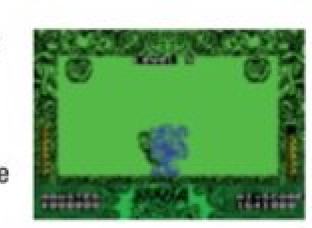
#### International Ninja Rabbits

A blatant cash-in on *TMNT* mania that also seems to stick the classic *Usagi Yojimbo* comic into its cynical blender, resulting in a poor side-scrolling brawler that suffers from ugly visuals and slow, boring gameplay.



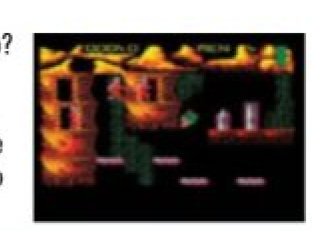
#### Ninja Hamster

One of the worst one-on-one fighters we've ever played, and looking like it could exist in the same universe as *Ninja Rabbits*, this game stars stupid animal fighters, zero gameplay and the laziest backgrounds in game history.



#### Ninja Commando

What's cooler than a ninja commando? Not only can he approach his target undetected, but when he catches his prey he kills them dramatically. Shame this beat-'em-up platformer doesn't do the profession justice.



#### Ninja Scooter Simulator

This side-scrolling obstacle course checkpoint chaser is in the style of Namco's *Metro-Cross* but starring a surfer dude on a scooter (not a ninja like the cover depicts). It looks good, controls fine and is a fun little game.



#### The Ninja Master

With visuals that look like they were drawn on an Etch-A-Sketch, Ninja Master tries to train you in the ancient arts of the ninja: breaking blocks, and killing empty cans with blow darts.





# Remembering DEATHCHASE

Way back in issue 48 of Retro Gamer, Deathchase sat proudly at the pinnacle of our list of the finest 25 Spectrum games. Today, Graeme Mason dons his black gloves and celebrates 30 years of dodging trees and pretending to be Luke Skywalker. . .






» [Spectrum] Shoot down the chopper and more filthy lucre was yours.




» [Spectrum] The main enemy in *Deathchase*: Trees!

## A 3D game that ran on a 16k machine? It was a dream come true!

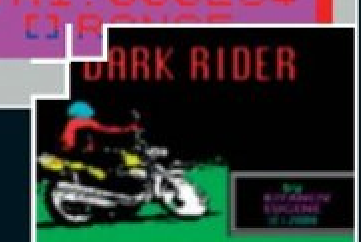
CRASH REVIEWER MATTHEW UFFINDEL

**Some games transcend time. Their playability does not wither with age; their gameplay does not become stale or stagnant; they remain as much fun as they were on their day of release. One such game is the Spectrum classic *Deathchase*, or as it is more commonly – if incorrectly – known, *3D Deathchase*.**

But we begin the story one step earlier. In the summer of 1983, publisher Micromega released a game called *Luna Crabs*, the debut title of one Mervyn Estcourt. The Clapham-based software house had been formed earlier in the year as an opportunistic off-shoot of a company named Taxsoft, keen to expand into games. This was principally for the purpose of supplying revenue to its line of business products, as Micromega's software manager, Neil Hooper, explains. "When we started, the idea was simply that we could become a software publisher, using our expertise and experience to get games and other programs published."

With Micromega soon cemented as a big player in the early Spectrum games market, Mervyn Estcourt clearly saw it as a potential home for *Luna Crabs*, although why he selected it in particular remains a mystery – certainly Micromega didn't feel the need to advertise for programmers. "These guys making games in their back bedrooms simply couldn't fund mass duplication," says Neil, "and that's where we came in. Mervyn simply came to us with a product and that's how our relationship with him began."

As with many games of the time, *Luna Crabs* dubiously boasted of 3D graphics, which in its case was actually partly true, with the eponymous crustaceans increasing in size as they approached the player's vehicle. Mervyn took this technique (dubbed "planar 3D") and utilised it in his next project, a racing game that echoed his love of motorbikes. The result was another fast-moving action game that he once more submitted to Micromega for it to distribute on his behalf. "Mervyn did everything from beginning to end – his games were entirely his creations," continues Neil, "and he simply gave us the code. Micromega's role was the distribution and packaging." On that subject, all Micromega's artwork was drawn by the same artist, as it tried to encourage a uniformity of image and design, while at the same time promoting




### IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** MICROMEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** MERVYN ESTCOURTT
- » **RELEASED:** 1983
- » **PLATFORM:** SPECTRUM
- » **GENRE:** RACING

### OTHER FAMOUS MERVYNS

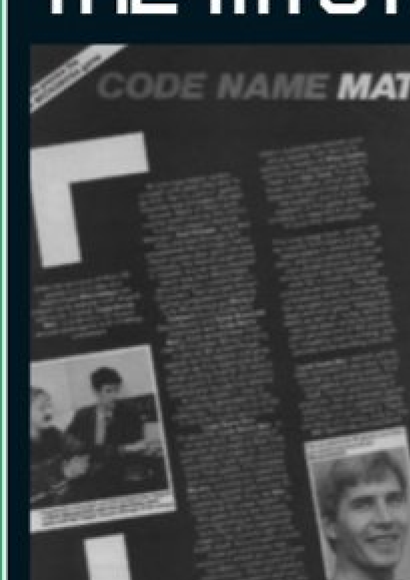
**MERVYN DAY –** Ex-West Ham and Leeds goalkeeper

**MERVYN KING –** Governor of the Bank of England

**MERVYN HUGHES –** Ex-Australian fast bowler

**MERVYN PEAKE –** Author, best known for the Gormenghast novels

### THE MYSTERIOUS MR. MERVYN




Born in Bristol in 1948, Mervyn Ernest John Estcourt began education at the Lawrence Weston School in the September of 1959 alongside his cousin Gillian, while living with his family in Mancroft Avenue, Bristol. Upon leaving school, Mervyn began work as a docker (most likely at nearby Avonmouth Docks) and at some point in the early Eighties developed an interest in programming. Although this was initially a side-line, a feature titled Code Name Mat in an issue of *Crash* from 1984 refers to Mervyn as an "ex-docker", suggesting he had decided to give up his trade in favour of becoming a full-time programmer. However, sometime after coding the Commodore 64 version of *Full Throttle* (retitled *Speed King*) for Digital Integration, Mervyn disappeared and information on him is incredibly scant since 1986. Did he become disillusioned by the industry? Had the publicity and fame his games had brought him got too much for this apparently shy man from the West Country? Hopefully one day, we'll find out...

> Mervyn did everything from beginning to end – his games were entirely his creations
>
> MICROMEGA'S NEIL HOOPER

its programmers. *Deathchase*'s cover appeared rather more futuristic than the game itself. "We saw it as a bit like the cover for a book, in that it was conceptual and there simply to sell the game. *Deathchase* was all about gameplay so we doubted anyone would care about it, and Mervyn's plot set the game in the year 2501 anyway!"

Neil was naturally excited to see his new star programmer's latest effort. "We were blown away and could instantly see this was probably the best thing out there – an absolute gem," he enthuses. *Deathchase* was subsequently released in the winter of 1983, although the game evaded the specialist Spectrum press, despite *Popular Computing Weekly* praising the exciting gameplay in a roundup of recent releases. Nevertheless, two months later, in the debut issue of *Crash* magazine, there was Mervyn's masterpiece sitting pretty as the inaugural Game of the Month – *Crash*'s award for gaming excellence prior to the invention of Crash Smashes. Editor Roger Kean reminisces: "I remember the enthusiasm of the reviewing pool; this was the game that, once word got around the playground of Ludlow School, had more potential reviewers knocking on the door to review than any other." The excitement continued at *Crash* HQ. "I imagine passers-by must have wondered what was going on," laughs Roger, "since after school hours for a couple of weeks it sounded like a riot as schoolboy reviewers fought for a go on the game on one of the Spectrums we had set up. Fortunately Matthew Uffindel was always there, prepared to wrestle for control of the Kempston joystick!" As you might expect, Matthew himself still holds the game in high regard today: "A 3D game that ran on a 16k machine? It was a dream come true! It was addictive, fantastic fun and pretty unique at a time when most other games were platformers," he recalls.

With the approving views in, the *Crash* editorial team constructed an effusive write-up. Their comments ranged from "Fantastic graphics and exceptionally smooth movement" to the incredible claim that it was "dangerously addictive to play". *Deathchase* had finally swerved maniacally into view and, helped by the *Crash* review, sales of the game rocketed and catapulted its author into the limelight. Micromega were inundated with demands for mass supplies of the game. "It was our biggest seller at the time," says Neil Hooper, "and although its sales were eventually eclipsed by Mervyn's next game, *Full Throttle*, it was always in clear second place, sales-wise." It seemed even a curiously muted review in *Crash*'s rival magazine, *Sinclair User*, couldn't stem the flow of gamers eager for a slice of biking and shooting action. The source of the reviewer's ire appeared to be the random and casual nature of the violence in *Deathchase* and a lukewarm score of six out of ten was awarded. "I was a bit disappointed about that at first," mentions Neil, "because they seemed to focus more on the story than the fun of the game. We got the impression that if it had been aliens on bikes it would have been okay.

» Micromega's futuristic advert depicted a ghostlike skeletal rider and a conspicuous absence of black gloves. Very stylish indeed.







» [Spectrum] Night Patrol soon got very tricky.

## MORE SPECTRUM EXCLUSIVES




**Pssst! (Ultimate, 1983)**

ONE OF Ultimate's excellent early Spectrum games, *Pssst!* also ran on a measly 16k and offered Speccy owners a colourful and entertaining slice of fun. As an added bonus it gave mischievous schoolkids an excuse to say a rude word…




**Skool (Microsphere, 1985)**

MICROSPHERE'S FOLLOW up to the equally magnificent *Skool Daze* curiously only received a Spectrum release despite the original seeing action on the Commodore 64. It expanded greatly on the first game by introducing a rival girls' school.



**Chaos (Games Workshop, 1985)**

JULIAN GOLLOP'S fantasy strategy game remains one of the finest multiplayer games on the Spectrum and only ever saw the light of day on the Sinclair machine. The full story on this and Julian's other games appeared in **Retro Gamer** issue 11.



**Quazatron (Hewson, 1986)**

THEORETICALLY A Spectrum version of the classic *Paradroid*, *Quazatron* was dissimilar enough for some to claim superiority over the C64 game. We're risking splinters and saying they're both damn fine games in their own right.



**Gunrunner (Hewson, 1987)**

BY 1987 it was unheard of for a Spectrum game to not get at least an Amstrad CPC release, but this underrated run-and-gunner remained Spectrum only thanks to the developers and publisher Hewson unable to agree on a price.



» [Spectrum] Night Patrol was a simple yet evocative change of scenery.

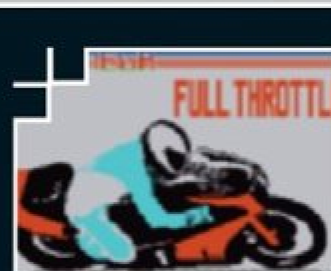


» [Spectrum] Sector 4 and things are hotting up.

But I got over it." *Deathchase*'s wafer-thin plot, set after an apocalyptic war, focused on the player hunting down enemy cyclists for cold hard cash. Like practically every facet of the game, it was concocted by Mervyn himself.

So with *Deathchase* a certified hit, we ask Neil why no other version was released to take advantage of its popularity. "I don't think we ever planned it, or asked Mervyn. By the time it came out he was already working on *Full Throttle*, researching tracks and developing the code." At this point the ex-Micromega software manager pauses and ponders for a moment before hitting us with a golden nugget of information – there *was* another version of *Deathchase* – sort of – for the American iteration of the Spectrum, the Timex Sinclair 2608. "I think [Timex] made a big mistake in changing its machine in some way that meant the majority of existing Spectrum games did not work with the machine. Timex approached us and asked for the rights to distribute *Deathchase* in the US which of course meant changing some of the code," reveals Neil. Micromega wasted no time in asking Mervyn if he'd tweak his code and construct a new title screen, the latter task because of Timex insisting on changing the name of the game. "I thought it was a disastrous idea, but we were a small company based in Clapham and this was Timex USA knocking on our door. It looked like it could be a large opportunity if it was successful." Unfortunately, as history shows, Timex was not successful and the re-released *Deathchase* barely registered, probably not helped by its new name: *Cyclepath*. "I believe it was a play on the word 'psychopath' and they though it was a cool name. We didn't argue."

30 years on, *Deathchase* still stands as a mightily impressive piece of programming, especially considering the limitations of the hardware. "The fact it was written in machine code and within 16k was totally amazing," says Matthew Uffindel, "and if you asked a programmer today to come up with a similar idea and do it all in 16k, they wouldn't know where to start." Unsurprisingly, Micromega's Neil Hooper is equally full of praise for the genius behind *Deathchase*. "Mervyn was brilliant on so many levels. I think he just had his brain wired in some way that he could talk assembly code – he saw it and coded it," he extols, "and to go with this, he had this extraordinary capacity for gameplay and fine-tuning to an extent where the way the nerves and eyes reacted to the game's pace were just within the player's capabilities. That was the real brilliance of all of Mervyn's games."




## DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

**LUNA CRABS**
**SYSTEMS:** SPECTRUM
**YEAR:** 1983

**FULL THROTTLE** (PICTURED)
**SYSTEMS:** SPECTRUM
**YEAR:** 1984

**SPEED KING**
**SYSTEMS:** COMMODORE 64
**YEAR:** 1985



» Micromega really pushed the 3D aspect of *Deathchase*.



» [Spectrum] Reaching the end of Sector 8 granted the player a big money bonus.

## REVISIONS, REMAKES AND REBOOTS

**DEATHCHASE (AMSTRAD CPC) – RICHARD WILSON**

"The engine itself is quite simple and not strictly 3D – but when those trees are coming towards you at that pace it doesn't really matter! I broke down the code using the WinAPE disassembler, which took a couple of days. Then I went about finding out what each routine does before re-writing the parts that wouldn't work as specified on the CPC. Actually I modified the engine itself very little to run on the CPC – *Deathchase* is quite simple by today's standards, but sometimes it's the simplest ideas that work the best."



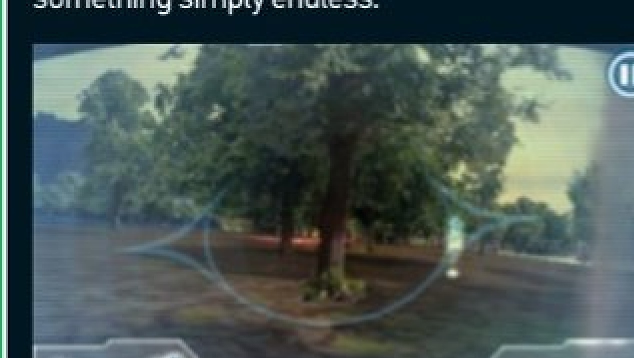
**DEATHCHASE (TANDY 16K/DRAGON 32) – JAMES MCKAY**

"I was a latecomer to the original, but could tell it had great playability and the action was just the right side of stressful. Actually the first computer I owned was a 16k Tandy Colour Computer and I really wanted to make a game that would work on this, and it made sense for it to work on the Dragon 32 as well, considering their similarities. Using the source code as provided by Richard Wilson, I had a choice of monochrome screen if I wanted to use the Spectrum graphics, but opted for four-colour mode instead, even though it meant I had to rework the graphics in a lower resolution. As a result, 'Day' and 'Night Patrol' became 'Forest' and 'Arctic Patrol'!"



**DARK RIDER (IOS) – EVGENIY KIYANOV**

"From a technical viewpoint I thought the original *Deathchase* was great. I started thinking about remaking it in 2008; nobody was making "endless runner" games then. Then I saw my son playing the original on an emulator and loving it, just like myself years ago. I wanted to make a storyline, and that's where the problems started as I underestimated all the work this would entail. So eventually I removed all cut-scenes, helicopters and story and made something simply endless."



# IMPORT ONLY

» CO-ORDINATES: 35°41' N 139°46' E

GAME ORIGIN



» COUNTRY: JAPAN
» POPULATION: 127,433,494
» CAPITAL: TOKYO
» NATIONAL LANGUAGE: JAPANESE
» CURRENCY: YEN
» TIME ZONE: GMT+9

## INFO



» **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
» **DEVELOPER:** MEGASOFT
» **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
» **ALSO ON:** GAME BOY, GAME GEAR
» **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
» **RELEASED:** 1993
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £25

## EVOLUTION OF THE GENRE

▲ **Retro**



**SYUSSEI OOZUMOU**
RELEASED: **1984**
This is earliest sumo game we could find is this arcade game by *Double Dragon* makers Technos. With nice detailed visuals and an intuitive by frantic button mashing grappling system, it's a fairly solid recreation of the sport.

▼ **Modern**



**WWE '13**
RELEASED: **2012**
Coming up empty when trying to find a modern sumo videogame, we copped out and went with a western wrestling game instead. *WWE '13* is the latest entry in the popular *Smackdown* versus *Raw* series, we've not played it so can't tell you if it's any good.

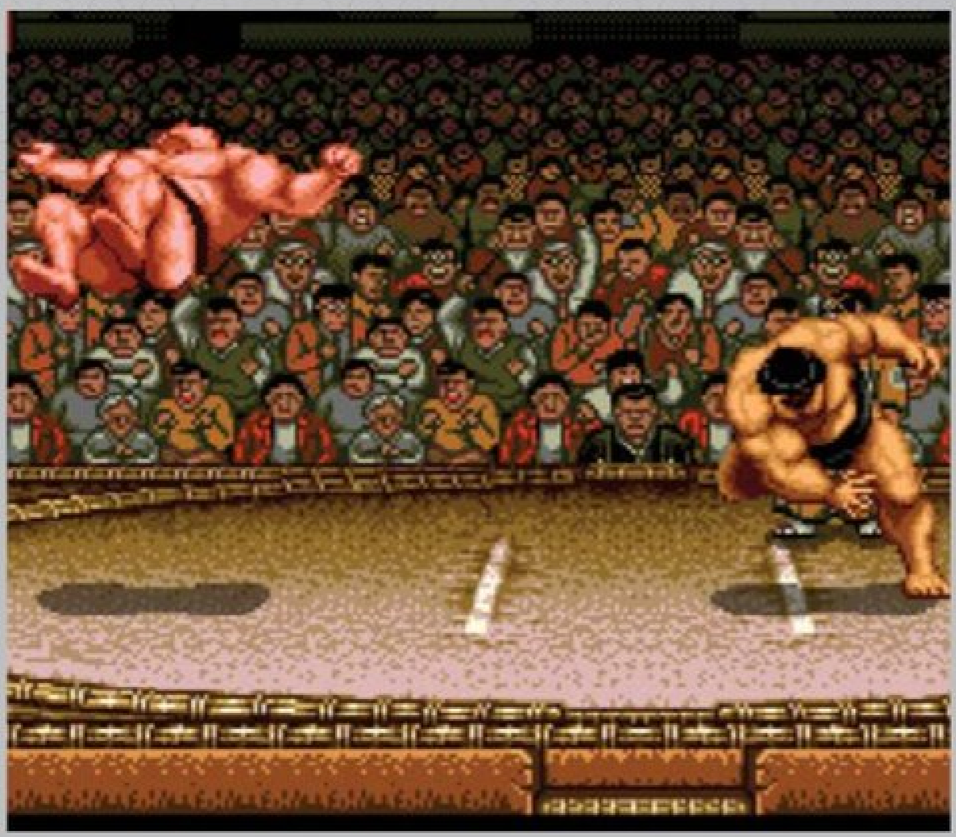
# AAH! HARIMANADA

**» If football's a funny old game then, by comparison, sumo must be a hilariously ancient one. Stuart Hunt doesn't have the build or the hair for sumo, but does have pretty good dexterity and patience, two things you'll need to play this obscure Mega Drive fighter**

**The sport of sumo wrestling is grossly under-represented in videogames. In fact, this month's title is the first we've come by – though we're sure there are more out there. Actually, let us don our research hats and go investigating… In the meantime, here are some sumo-related facts to keep you entertained, some of which may or may not be true.**

1. Sumo is the national sport of Japan. 2. It dates back to the Edo period of Japan and was played to entertain the Gods. 3. The game is traditionally played by large men in loincloths, each of which is worth thousands of pounds. 4. There is an alternative version of the sport called Suitmo which is played by tall skinny men wearing sharp black tailored suits.

Right, sorry about that, we're back. Well, would you believe it, it turns out that there are actually a lot more sumo videogames than we thought, around 20 in fact, and most have appeared on Nintendo consoles and didn't see release outside of Japan. The one we want to draw your attention to is *Aah! Harimanada*, which



» [Mega Drive] The human hammer throw competition was in full swing, first prize: a loincloth change.

appeared on the Mega Drive in Japan and was based on a popular manga and anime. It was also developed by Megasoft, developer of one of the Mega Drive's greatest action games – *Shinobi III: Return Of The Ninja Master.*

There are three versions of *Aah! Harimanada*, one for the Game Boy and another for the Game Gear. The Mega Drive version is often criticised by westerners for being ferociously tough. As such, there are many who will warn you off it. And initially we were in agreement. However, after discovering who was behind the game we decided to stick with it, and were glad we did. Simply spamming the fire buttons won't get you off the second bout, but with only three buttons to worry about, *Aah! Harimanada*'s combat system is simple to figure out, and when you do it gets a helluva lot more entertaining.

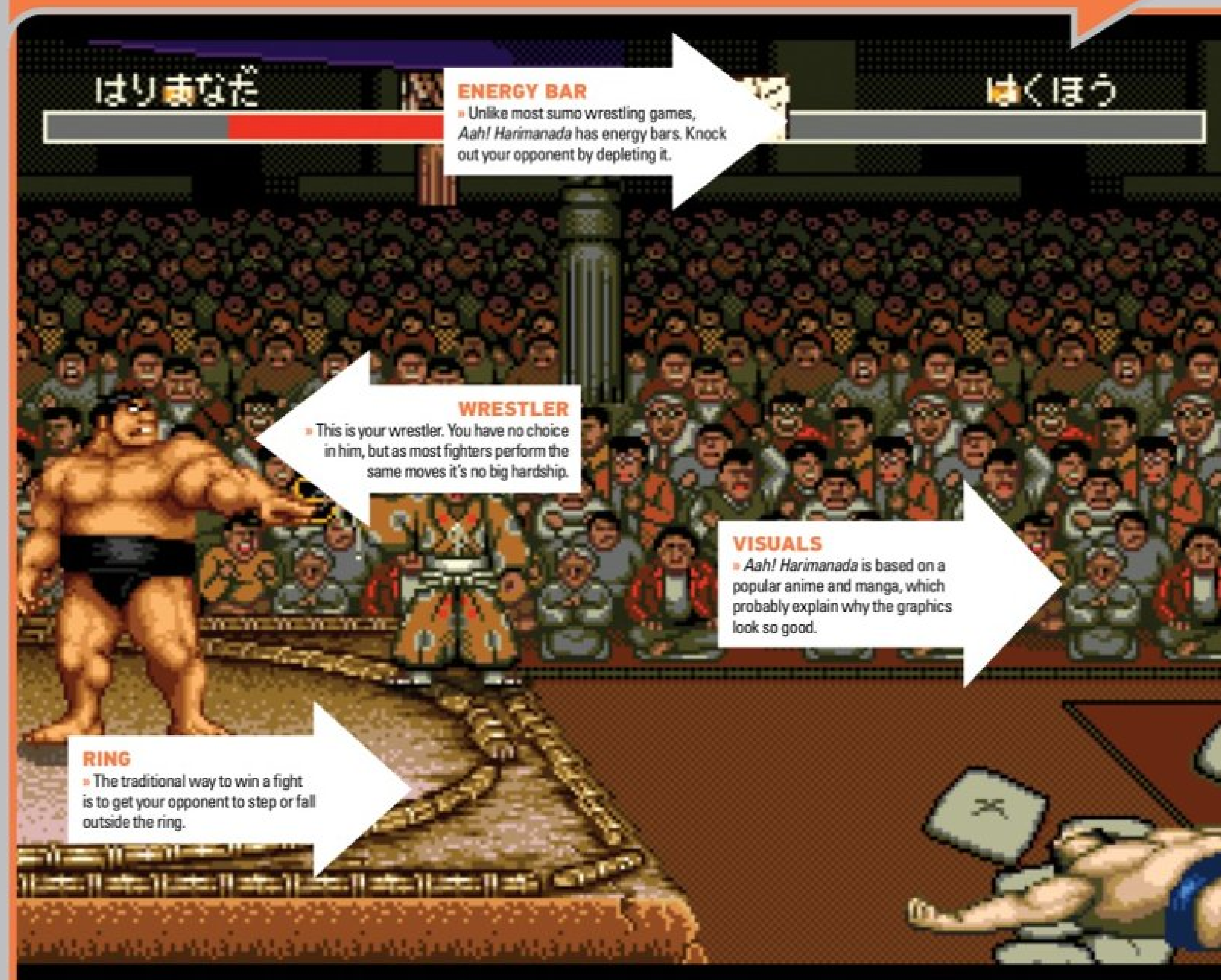


» [Mega Drive] The wrestlers can perform special moves, like this one here. Clearly the developers weren't aiming to create a factually accurate sumo sim.




» [Mega Drive] We're not going to say what this guy's cheeks and nose look like; we're way more mature than that.

## GO DEEPER
### A Sumo Lesson




**ENERGY BAR**
» Unlike most sumo wrestling games, *Aah! Harimanada* has energy bars. Knock out your opponent by depleting it.

**WRESTLER**
» This is your wrestler. You have no choice in him, but as most fighters perform the same moves it's no big hardship.

**VISUALS**
» *Aah! Harimanada* is based on a popular anime and manga, which probably explain why the graphics look so good.

**RING**
» The traditional way to win a fight is to get your opponent to step or fall outside the ring.

> "With only three buttons on the Mega Drive, the game's combat system is relatively simple to figure out"



*Aah! Harimanada* takes dramatic licence with the sport it's based on by playing more like a one-on-one fighter in the mould of *Street Fighter II*. The wrestlers have energy bars and special moves, and matches can be won by pushing or throwing your opponent out of the ring or depleting their energy bar to get a knock out. The game also has an air of *Punch-Out!!* too as you're only given the choice of one fighter, and you must help him climb the ranks of various sumo wrestling circuits (that's the impression we got, anyway). Before fights, a screen flashes up showing the stats of you and your opponent, though as it's all written in Japanese, that's probably only useful if you speak the language.

As we said, the control system is spread across three buttons, which makes it pretty simple to grasp. You have a light attack, heavy attack and a grapple which can be used to pull and push your opponent. Depending on the opponent, some fights can be won by madly mashing away at the two attack buttons, but other wrestlers are just too strong and will quickly shave chunks off your fighter's energy bar if you decide to go toe-to-toe with them. Against these stronger opponents, it is best to block their attacks (blocking is performed by pressing the D-pad away from your opponent) and force them to the edge of the mat. Initiating a grapple there will cause both men to lock horns and by madly smashing away at the buttons you will hopefully throw your opponent out of the ring. Some of the heavier set fighters are difficult (maybe even impossible) to defeat in this way though, and in this instance the best tactic is generally to exploit their slow speed and just go for a KO.

Though the fighting does get repetitive and there are a lot of opponents to face (we got to about thirty, and it seemed like there were more), *Aah! Harimanada* has a real addictive quality. This is basically owing to the random skills and abilities of the opponents, the tense and unpredictable nature of the sport and the fact that fights can be over in seconds. Add some lovely looking chunky arcade visuals (though the music and sound FX are not all that great) and *Aah! Harimanada* is by far the best sumo wrestling videogame we've played. [It's the *only* sumo wrestling videogame we've played -Ed]



## CAN'T IMPORT? YOU COULD TRY

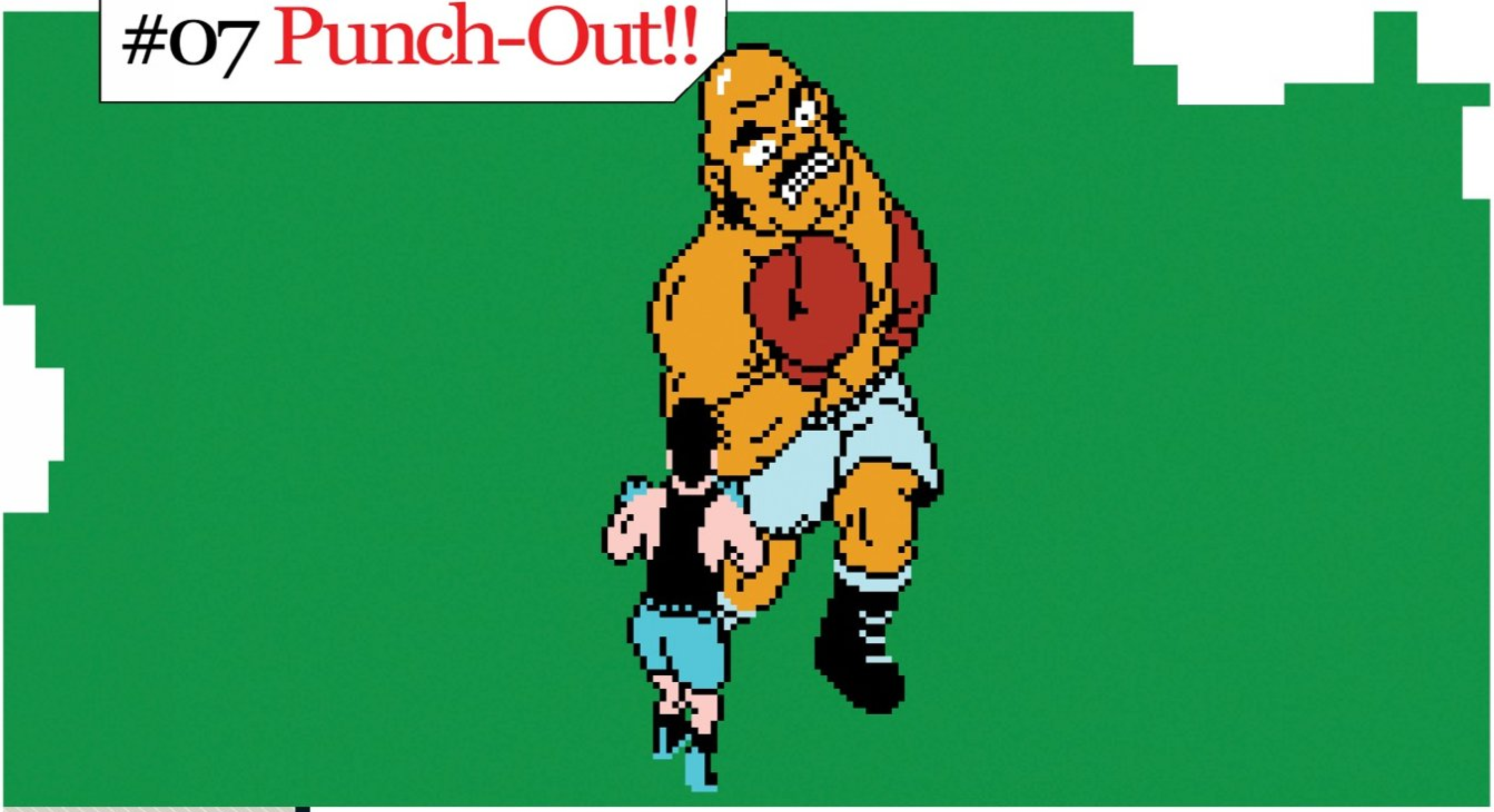


**STREET FIGHTER II (PLAYING AS E. HONDA)**

» It's obviously not sumo wrestling but as we're struggling to find any sumo wrestling videogame that was released in Europe (do get in touch if you can find one, there's some random bit of office tat in it for you) just play *Street Fighter II* and select E. Honda. With special moves and energy bars, *Aah! Harimanada* feels a little bit *Street Fighter* anyway.

# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO...

# #07 Punch-Out!!



## Punch-Out!! distilled the sport of boxing brilliantly and saw Nintendo drawing on its talent for creating memorable characters to deliver a knockout videogame. Stuart Hunt steps back into the ring...

### Instant Expert

**Fighter Vodka Drunkenski** was renamed to the less intimidating Soda Popinski in the home version as a result of Nintendo's strict censorship polices at the time.

**Fan favourite King** Hippo appeared as a villain in the animated television show *Captain N: The Game Master.*

***Punch-Out!!* stories** appeared in the pages of *Nintendo Comics System* series, published by Valiant Comics.

***Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!*** did appear in arcades. It was one of the 54 games that made up Nintendo's PlayChoice-10 coin-op series.

**Following *Punch-Out!!*'s** success, Nintendo rebranded its Micro vs System game *Boxing* as *Punch-Out!!* for its US release.

***Punch-Out!!* creator** Genyo Takeda worked as producer on the N64 games *Pilotwings 64* and *Dr. Mario 64.*

***Arm Wrestling* featured** the same pull-able joystick in *Super Punch-Out!!* – in *Arm Wrestling* it was used to catch prize money thrown by the promoter.

***Teleroboxer*, the Virtual** Boy's only (released) fighting game, has gameplay very similar to *Punch-Out!!*. Its slightly more outlandish theme sees you face off against of animal-inspired robotic boxers.

**Though it wasn't the first in the series, *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!* marked the turning point for the *Punch-Out!!* franchise. But while the legendary boxer may have helped drive the game's success on NES, it's Nintendo's clever take on boxing and quirky cast of cartoon boxers that many fans remember most fondly.**

The origins of *Punch-Out!!* can actually be traced back to arcades, and, refreshingly, someone who isn't Gunpei Yokoi or Shigeru Miyamoto: Genyo Takeda. Joining Nintendo in the Seventies, Takeda's contribution to Nintendo was massive. Widely cited as its first ever game designer, Takeda was involved with Nintendo's earliest arcade games – *Laser Clay Shooting System* and *EVR Race*.

Initially, Takeda worked alongside hardware designer Masayuki Uemura within Nintendo's R&D2 team, but after proving himself was soon given his own internal team – R&D3 – to lead. A small troupe of around 20 people, R&D3's focus was hardware design for Nintendo's coin-op and domestic markets, however Takeda would also oversee a number of popular NES titles targeted at Western gamers, including *Pro Wrestling*, the underrated RPG *Star Tropics* and *Punch-Out!!*.

Takeda's input is evident throughout Nintendo's history; pick a period and Takeda's name is never far away. Credited for coming up with the battery save pack inside NES cartridges, he also assisted in the design of many of Nintendo consoles. He's the man behind the N64 analog controller and was closely involved with the design of the GameCube, its controller and peripherals. Currently senior manager director at Nintendo, Takeda also had a key role in the development and direction of the Wii and was one of the people behind the decision to gear the console towards innovation rather than graphical power. Of course, to most retro gamers Takeda will always be best known as the creator of *Punch-Out!!*.

In the tradition of Nintendo's odd love of dual screens, *Punch-Out!!*'s cabinet featured two monitors: a top one that showed the statistics of the fight and a bottom screen where the action played out. The coin-op controlled and played in the same way as the later home version of the game, with the notable exception that players assumed the role of a nameless green-haired boxer with a translucent wireframe body, with the camera positioned directly behind him.

In terms of control, the coin-op featured a four-way joystick used to make your boxer dodge left, dodge right, and lift and drop his guard. Attacks were performed via three fire buttons (again, much like the later NES game): jab left, jab right and a big blue button which was used to perform either a knockout blow or uppercut upon filling a KO meter at the top of the bottom screen. The original *Punch-Out!!* presented six fighters to fight – Glass Joe, Piston Hurricane, Bald Bull, Kid Quick, Pizza Pasta and finally Mr. Sandman – and defeating them required players to

## Pixel Perfect

**Our favourite NES fighters showing off their best moves**



# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO...
## #07 Punch-Out!!




» [Arcade] *Punch-Out!!*'s origin can be found in arcades; there were two coin-ops before the series came to the NES.

dodge their punches, read their eye flashing attack cues and time dodges, blocks and punches accordingly.

*Punch-Out!!* was a hit for Nintendo, and wanting to capitalise on its popularity an arcade sequel was quickly released the following year. *Super Punch-Out!!* featured a new roster of fighters that comprised Bear Hugger, Dragon Chan, Vodka Drunkenski, Great Tiger, and Super Macho Man. Little of the formula was altered with, with perhaps the biggest new feature being a pull-able joystick that now made your fighter (the same green-haired guy, now sporting longer hair) duck – which was necessary for escaping certain special attacks.

The first ever home version of *Punch-Out!!* was *Punch-Out!! Gold Edition* (aka *Punch-Out!! Special*). Created as a competition prize for the Nintendo Famicom Golf US tournament, they were produced on gold cartridges (hence its name) and only 10,000 were made. Now regarded as something of a Holy Grail among NES collectors, this early version features slightly different colour palettes and audio to the final release. It's also one fight shorter, as the game ends on Super Macho Man, as apposed to Mike Tyson/Mr. Dream.

So the story goes, around the time of *Punch-Out!!* Gold's release Nintendo Of America's founder/president Minoru Arakawa was at a boxing match, and one of the fighters impressed him through his strength and power. The boxer was Mike Tyson and Arakawa decided he would be perfect to appear in the game. Some sources state that Tyson was reputedly paid $50,000 for the three-year likeness deal that saw him become the new final opponent. With Tyson mania rampant, it was a clever strategy, one that, as Arakawa foresaw, helped *Punch-Out!!*'s popularity. Tyson was fast securing himself a place among the all-time boxing greats, and the opportunity to trade blows with a digital version was a big selling point. This wasn't lost on the marketing team either as Tyson appeared in a television commercial for the game to deliver this virtual challenge – "You've got a shot at Tyson's title," the voiceover guy declares, "but for that you've got to beat Mike Tyson". At which point Tyson turns around in his swivel chair and laughs a bit maniacally at the camera.

Knowing that a straight coin-op conversion would be beyond its 8-bit console, Nintendo made a number of changes to the home version of *Punch-Out!!*. Aside from adding Tyson to the roster and title, Nintendo also introduced a boxing underdog and trainer in the diminutive form of Little Mac and not so diminutive form of Doc Louis. The roster of opponents comprised a mix of new boxers and familiar fighters from both coin-ops. In terms of the core gameplay, tweaks were also made. Mac could only block upwards but still attacked with a combination of high and low left and right jabs. He also had a special haymaker attack, which took the form of stars which players earned by connecting certain jabs at the right time. A stamina counter was also introduced, with the number of stamina hearts decreasing with every successful block Mac made. With no hearts an exhausted Mac would be unable to throw a punch until he dodged an attack.

Between rounds, respite sections were also added. Popular among fans, they allowed Mac to regain some strength, and saw Doc giving him encouragement and advice while his opponents tried their best to psyche him out. There was also a new referee, who looked like a certain Nintendo mascot, and no boxing game would be complete without a training sequence, and this came in the form of a now iconic cut-scene that saw Mac running on the streets of New York in a fetching pink tracksuit while Doc cycled ahead.

For the re-release of *Punch-Out!!* Nintendo didn't renew Tyson's contract but replaced him with a new final pugilist, Mr. Dream – who wasn't as imposing but mimicked Tyson's moves. But by this time it didn't matter; *Punch-Out!!* had secured its place in virtual boxing's Hall Of Fame and becoming one of Nintendo's most popular sports game.




» [NES] One of the things that made *Punch-Out!!* so popular was its roster of boxer opponents.

## Timeline

All the Punch-Outs!! and the year they were released. How many have you played?

### »Punch-Out!! 1984

The series debuted in arcades in 1984. It featured six cartoon pugilists, starred a green-haired boxer with a see-through wiremesh body, with the game playing out from directly behind him.





### »Punch-Out!! 1984

This Game & Watch title, released as part of the Micro Vs. range, was renamed *Punch-Out!!* for its US release. With side-scrolling gameplay, it plays closer to the NES game *Urban Champ* than *Punch-Out!!*.

### »Super Punch-Out!! 1985

The success of the game saw Nintendo release a quick sequel the following year. More expansion than full sequel, it introduced five new, more challenging, boxers and added a new duck feature.





### »Punch-Out!! Gold Edition 1986

Created as a competition prize, this marks the first version of Punch-Out!! for the NES. Featuring a few differences over the retail versions, only 10,000 were manufactured.

### »Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!/ Punch-Out!! 1987

The retail version introduced a few new boxers, as well as a new hero, Mike Tyson as the final boss, and made the series a household name.





### »Super Punch-Out!! 1994

Though it's not a port of the coin-op of the same name, this SNES sequel returns to the series' translucent boxer roots. Bigger than previous games in the series, it featured a lot more fighters.

### »Punch-Out!! 2009

Developed in conjunction with Next Level Games, *Punch-Out!!* Wii series plays like a mixture of the NES and coin-op games. Its look and gameplay feels most like SNES *Super Punch-Out!!*.





### »Doc Louis's Punch-Out!! 2009

This exclusive digital mini-game for Club Nintendo Platinum Members saw Little Mac step inside the ring to spar against his mentor and trainer Doc Louis and compete in three separate challenges.

# Memorable Moments

**We present the best bits of the best sports game Nintendo ever made**

### First win

Winning your first fight is pretty darn memorable. Whether it's the original coin-op or the NES version you played first, it would have been against the not exactly formidable force of Glass Joe – a paper boxer with a fragile glass jaw. It still feels good to start your boxing career, though.






### Cameos

Both Donkey Kong and Mario make cameo appearances in the audience of the original *Punch-Out!!* coin-op. Sitting apart from one another, the two clearly aren't speaking following the whole girlfriend kidnapping thing.



### Ape escape

DK also appeared in the audience in *Wii Punch-Out!!* but also played a secret opponent. Most of his moves are taunts, and he only has two main attacks. Doc even suggests calling a plumber pal who might be able to help Mac out.



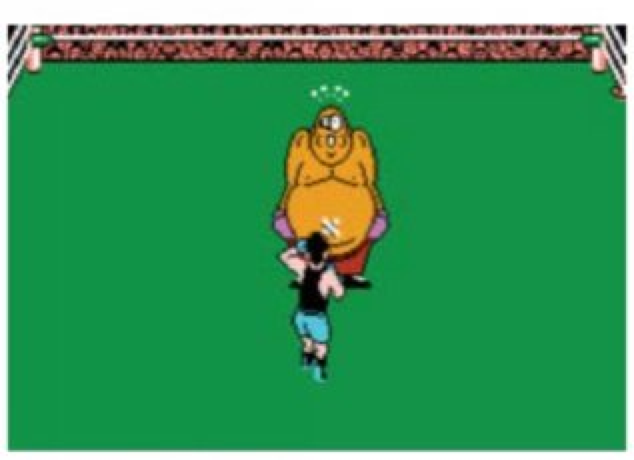

### Mario the mediator

Adding to his list of professions, Mario played referee in the home version of *Punch-Out!!*. This marked Mario's first ever speaking part in a videogame: a loud ribbit that sounds far removed from his usual high-pitched voice.



### Celebrity knockout

Prove you've got what it takes and all that stands between you a glory is this man right here. Mike Tyson was a formidable final opponent, capable of sending Mac to the mat in a single uppercut. Good reflexes and concentration were needed.



### King of the ring

A fan favourite (which is amazing considering how few games he appeared in), King Hippo was an amusing and memorable opponent – punch him in the gob, then sock him repeatedly in the bellybutton when his shorts are down.



### Getting stronger

In the tradition of boxing films like *Rocky*, *Rocky II*, *Rocky III*, and *Rocky IV*, *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!* featured a homage to the training scene, one which has become something of a *Punch-Out!!* meme.




### Sound advice

Between rounds, Doc would give Mac words of encouragement… or plug the Nintendo Fun Club by telling players to sign up. By tapping the Select button, Doc would pat Mac's shoulder quicker, helping him regain some strength.



### Little Mac and fries

After the chicken wire fighter in the *Punch-Out!!* coin-ops, Nintendo introduced a far more memorable hero in Little Mac, joined by his trainer Doc Louis. Mac was something of a calcium kid, Doc a cholesterol middle aged man.



### Are we dreaming?

Nintendo chose not to renew the Mike Tyson deal, resulting in him being removed from the re-release of *Punch-Out!!*. He was replaced with Mr Dream who was pretty much a straight palette swap that mimicked Tyson's style.



### Star power

By timing his punches, Mac earned stars that allowed him to perform powerful jumping hooks. Incredibly satisfying, and the best way to deliver a final blow to an opponent, that ringing sound to signal you earned one is the stuff of joy.

## The spin-offs!!



### »Arm Wrestling

Around the time that *Super Punch-Out!!* was released into arcades, Genyo Takeda released a similar style of game based around the sport of arm-wrestling. Employing a similar graphic style, two screen cabinet, green-haired hero as *Punch-Out!!*, and a thinly veiled Bald Bull cameo, it's a great game that fans should definitely check out.



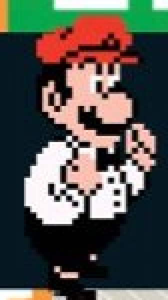
### »Power-Punch 2

This title started as a outsourced sequel to *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!*. However, due to the bad press surrounding Tyson and the poor quality of the game, it was dropped. It was picked up, Tyson was replaced for another boxer, and the quality issue, we assume, was never addressed – as it's a terrible stab at doing *Punch-Out!!* in outer space. It's also not actually a sequel.




### »Frank Bruno's Boxing

Apparently *Frank Bruno's Boxing* was originally planned to be a conversion of the *Super Punch-Out!!* coin-op. This makes complete sense as the look, gameplay and enemy boxers look identical (although the boxer names are changed) to the coin-op, with the big notable difference being that in this version you play as Frank.



# The boxers of Punch-Out!!

**Retro Gamer reunites** every Eighties Punch-Out!! boxer. How many do you remember facing, and how many did you successfully punch out?



### LITTLE MAC
**FROM: BRONX, NEW YORK**
**WEIGHT: 107LBS**

Little Mac is the lightest boxer in the series, weighing in at just over 100 lbs. What he lacks in body mass index through, he makes up for in grit and determination.



### GLASS JOE
**FROM: PARIS, FRANCE**
**WEIGHT: 110LBS**

With almost 100 knock-outs to his name (receiver of), Joe does more taunting than boxing, making him the perfect sparring partner to get acquainted with the twitch gameplay of the series.



### PISTON HURRICANE
**FROM: HAVANA, CUBA**
**WEIGHT: 170LBS**

No relation to Piston Honda, Hurricane hails from Cuba. It's believed his name comes from the fact that his home was hit by a ferocious hurricane. Lucky it wasn't damp course.



### BALD BULL
**FROM: ISTANBUL, TURKEY**
**WEIGHT: 298LBS**

Bald Bull has appeared in every *Punch-Out!!* with the exception of the *Super Punch-Out!!* coin-op. He's a formidable foe and, as his namesake implies, likes to charge at his opponents.



### PISTON HONDA
**FROM: TOKYO, JAPAN**
**WEIGHT: 174LBS**

Piston is immensely proud of his homeland and was likely named after a certain Japanese motor car manufacturer… and a car part. Look out for his eyebrow cues and those quick jabs.



### KID QUICK
**FROM: BROOKLYN, NEW YORK**
**WEIGHT: 220LBS**

Kid only appeared in *Punch-Out!!* coin-op. Similar in shape to Glass Joe, but a faster boxer, many believe Nintendo originally planned to have him appear in *Wii Punch-Out!!* as Disco Kid looks similar to him.



### PIZZA PASTA
**FROM: NAPOLI, ITALY**
**WEIGHT: 235LBS**

Pizza Pasta hails from Italy and, like Kid Quick, seems to have been retired after one appearance. Pasta's signature attack sees him grab his opponent before giving them a nasty uppercut.



### MR. SANDMAN
**FROM: PHILADELPHIA, USA**
**WEIGHT: 284LBS**

Sandman was the final opponent in the original *Punch-Out!!*, and gets his name from putting his opponents to sleep. He's a tough opponent because his fight style is varied and hard to predict.



### BEAR HUGGER
**FROM: PA, CANADA**
**WEIGHT: 440LBS**

Bear is bald, beardy and likes to wrestle bears in his spare time. The first opponent in the *Super Punch-Out!!* coin-op, players had to use the ducking manoeuvre to escape his signature 'bear hug' attack.



**DRAGON CHAN**
**FROM: HONG KONG**
**WEIGHT: 130 LBS**

Clearly modelled on Bruce Lee, Dragon Chan is the only boxer in the *Punch-Out!!* series who uses his feet – mixing up his slaps and punches with illegal kicks and other questionable aggressive leg waving.



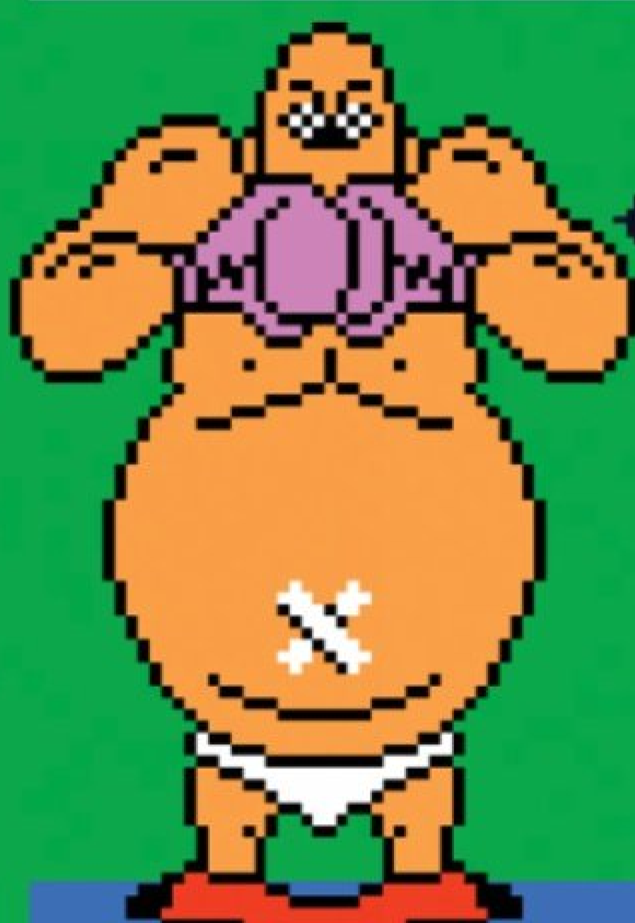
**VODKA DRUNKENSKI**
**(A.K.A SODA POPINSKI)**
**FROM: MOSCOW, U.S.S.R**
**WEIGHT: 237 LBS**

*Punch-Out!!* is so lax when it comes to rules that they even allow drinking. But for the NES home release, Nintendo cleaned up Vodka's act a little, replacing the mind-altering liquid for a much tamer nerve-settling soda pop instead.



**GREAT TIGER**
**FROM: BOMBAY, INDIA**
**WEIGHT: 132 LBS**

We're not sure where the WBA would stand on teleportation, but in *Punch-Out!!* it appears to be totally legal. Twist it to your advantage here. When Tiger does his teleportation flurry, block or dodge the punches and then punish him when he's dizzy.



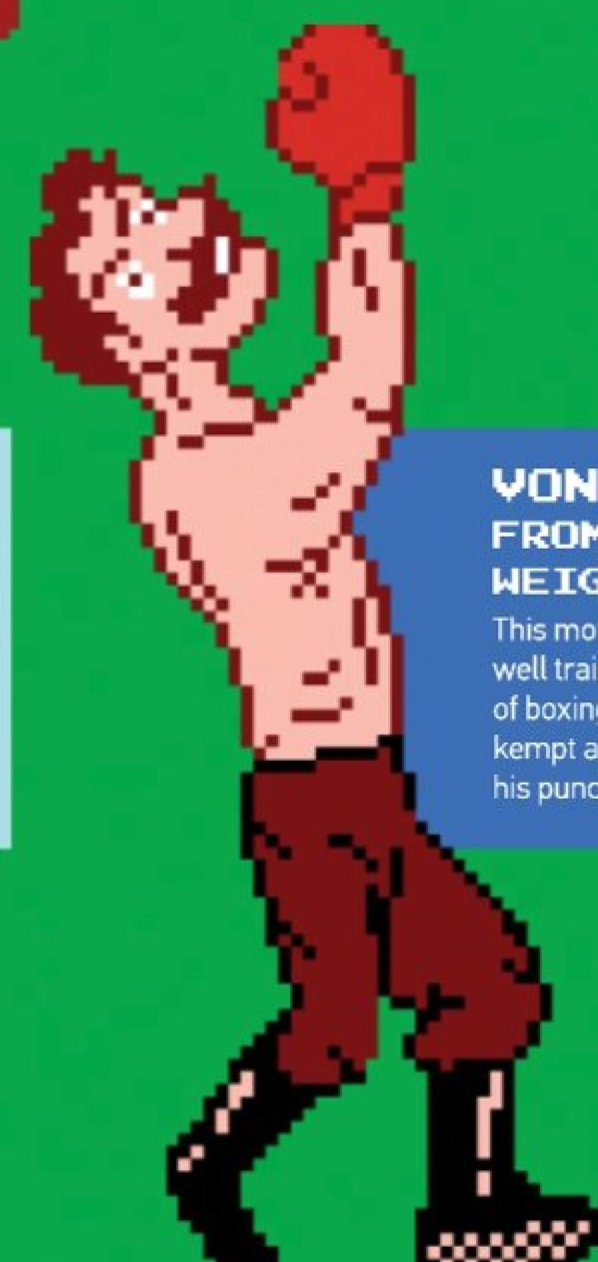
**KING HIPPO**
**FROM: HIPPO ISLAND, SOUTH PACIFIC**
**WEIGHT: ??? LBS**

King Hippo might be a block expert, but when he opens his mouth, give him a knuckle sandwich and watch his shorts hit the mat and belly get exposed. Pummel it, knock him down once and he'll remain there for the count.



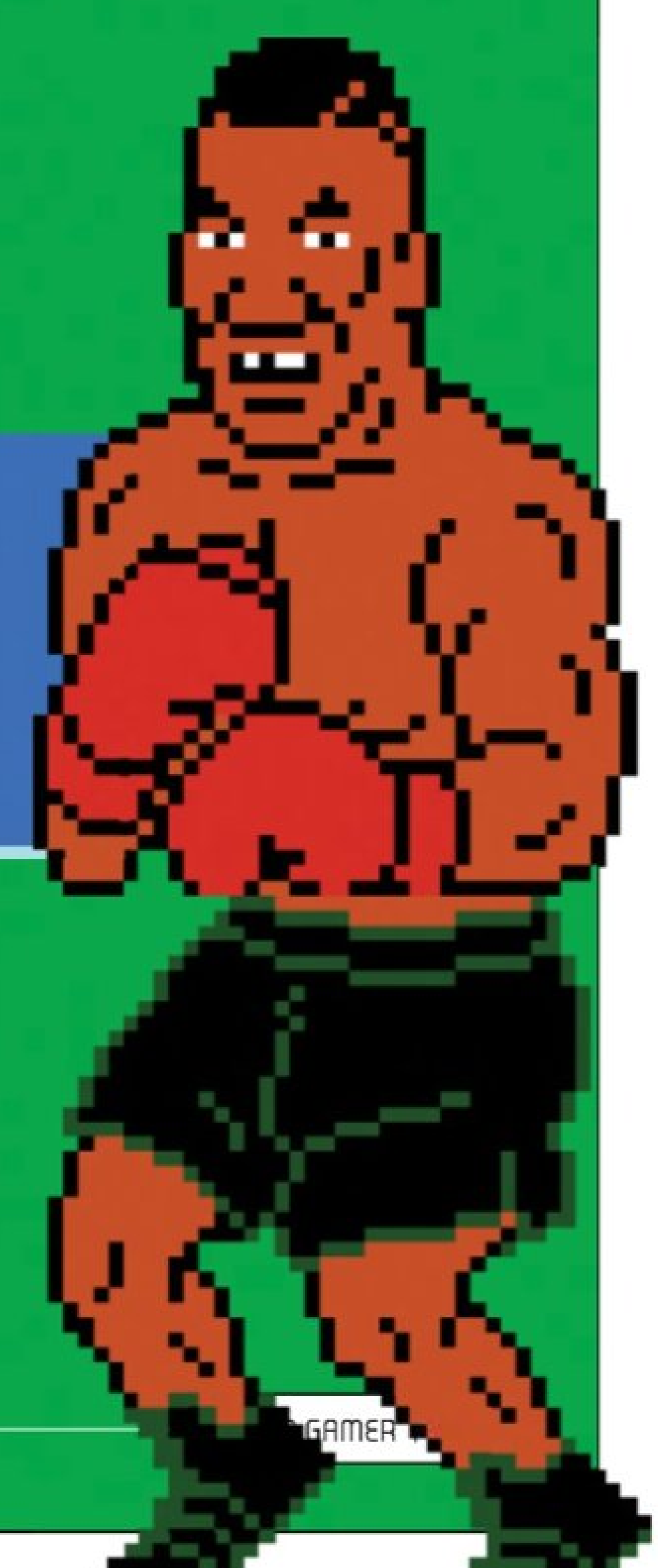
**DON FLAMENCO**
**FROM: MADRID, SPAIN**
**WEIGHT: 152 LBS**

This vain fighter from Spain cares far more about his looks and adoring female fans than his opponents. Entering the ring with a rose clenched in his teeth, he won't make the first move so punch him where it hurts him the most.



**VON KAISER**
**FROM: BERLIN, GERMANY**
**WEIGHT: 114 LBS**

This moustachioed German looks like he's well trained in the Queensbury rules school of boxing. He's quick, his facial hair is well kempt and his alert signals so obvious that his punches can be easily avoided.



**MIKE TYSON**
**FROM: CATSKILL, N.Y.**
**WEIGHT: 220 LBS**

Tyson is the ultimate challenge for any *Punch-Out!!* fan. Capable of delivering uppercuts that can send Mac down in one, Tyson is a formidable opponent and one of the hardest boxers in the series. He's not unbeatable though.



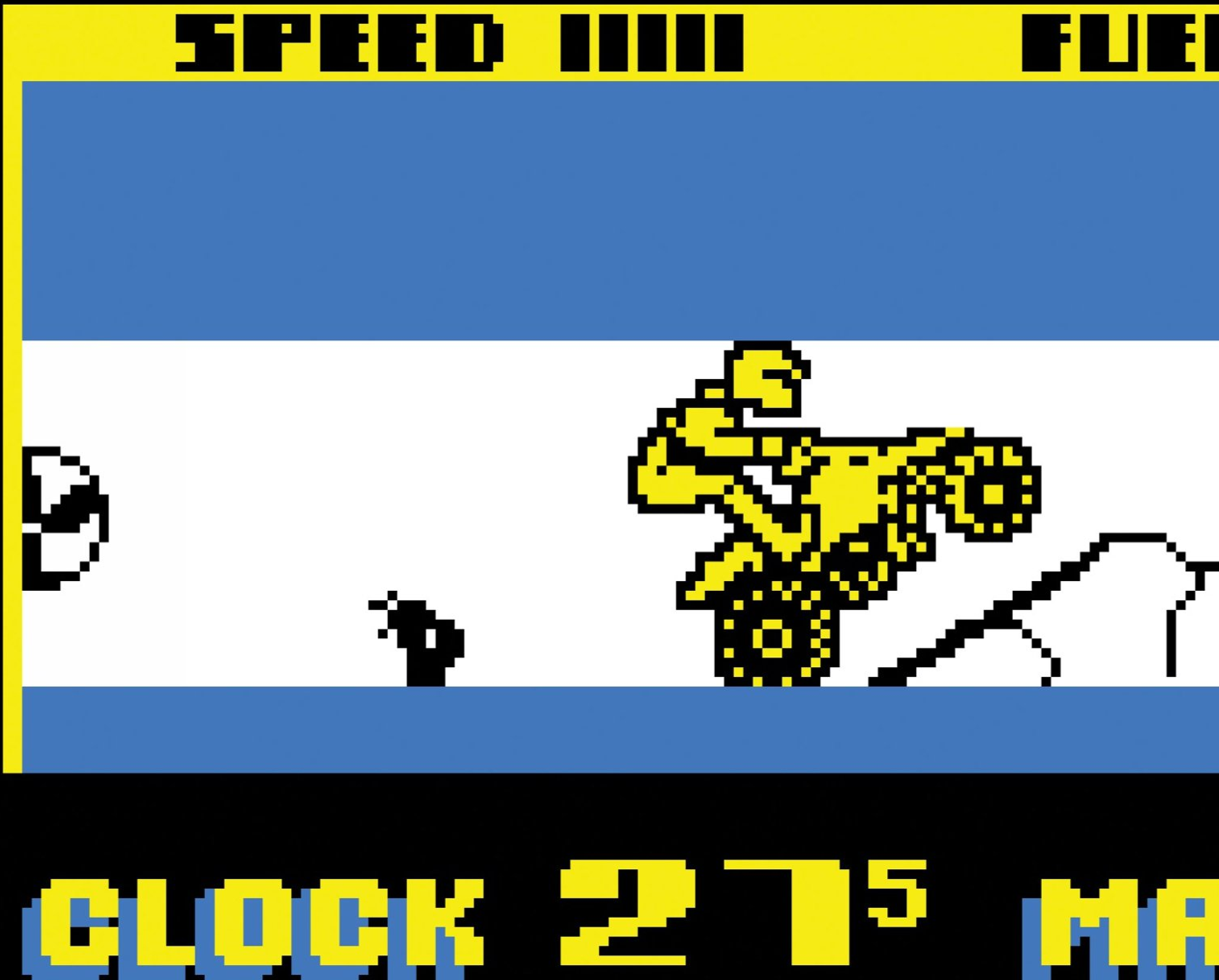
**SUPER MACHO MAN**
**FROM: HOLLYWOOD, CA**
**WEIGHT: 242 LBS**

The final opponent in the Super *Punch-Out!!* coin-op, and 'gold' version of *Punch-Out!!*, Macho Man adores his body, and likes showing off as much of it as possible by choosing to wear skimpy underpants. Muscles and fake tan aside, he's not one to be underestimated.



**MR. DREAM**
**FROM: DREAMLAND**
**WEIGHT: 235 LBS**

Mr. Dream stepped into Tyson's boots when Nintendo chose not to renew his contract. With the obvious exception of Tyson, Mr Dream looks the most real boxer in the series, despite the fact he hails from a place called Dreamland.



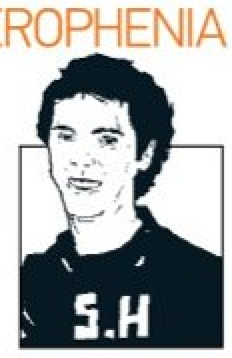

# ICEBERGS




# ATV Simulator

QUADBIKEROPHENIA

RETROREVIVAL »




» CODEMASTERS
» CPC
» 1988

**Let's get this out of the way: I apologise to your eyes. Visually, the CPC version of *ATV Simulator* is no Megan Fox. In fact, it's probably not even a mouldy fox that's been struck by an artic lorry and had its spilled insides cruelly feasted on by inebriated crows, and us stretching its graphics over two pages of this magazine is doing nothing to make them look any prettier – I know this. But looks aren't everything.**

*ATV Simulator* is a racing checkpoint racer in the style of physics geared racers such as *Kickstart* and *Trials HD*. Released under Code Masters 'simulator' budget label, though it wasn't as good as the legendary *Kickstart, ATV Simulator* was a fun and pretty additive little game.

It offered six trials for players to tackle with the simple objective of getting to each one's finish line within the maximum time allotted. Take too long and your ATV career came to an abrupt end as there are no extra tries or continues to fall back on – something that does well to keep the pressure on.

While it might not be the fastest or prettiest game on four wheels, enjoyment came from wrestling with your quad bike across each of the six trails, with each set across a different type of terrain. These surfaces ranged from sand and grasslands to slippery ice, and each stage was dressed accordingly – the desert track had a few camels in the distance, while the ice level a few beach ball playing sea lions.

As well as the time limit, players had to also keep an eye on their fuel. To successfully complete the course, players had to drive their quad bike at just the right speed and sometimes perform the occasional wheelie just to get over certain obstructions. Get your vehicle stuck between a rock and a hard sphinx, and you could perform a bunny hop to escape and continue with the race. Failure to estimate your approach and speed correctly would see your little rider fall from his bike in spectacular fashion and you having to guide him back to its saddle, costing you precious time.

If you're looking for a neat *Kickstart* clone then *ATV Simulator* may fit the bill nicely.




FROM THE ARCHIVES

**RETRO GAMER** DIGS UP THE FILES OF THE CLASSIC COMPANIES OF OLD

# Bizarre Creations

Garnering a reputation for being a racing game specialist, Bizarre Creations released a variety of titles before shutting its doors in 2011. Kim Wild speaks to former employees about what made the games company so memorable

**Before the name Bizarre Creations came about, Martyn Chudley's small team of five initially went under the moniker of 'Raising Hell' in 1988. In 1990, the team released an impressive platformer with shooting elements called *The Killing Game Show* on the Amiga, with the game later ported to Atari ST and Sega Mega Drive. Taking control of a robot equipped with two cannons on each side with the aim to reach the end of the level before the rising water level wipes you out, *The Killing Game Show* was an enjoyable but punishing title. It also featured some unique gameplay ideas, with the ability to fast forward a level and replay certain areas, a gameplay twist that has become far more common in today's modern games.**

Unfortunately, Sega disapproved of the hellish branding for a development company so a new name had to be found. While you will see that the Amiga and Atari ST versions are credited to Raising Hell Software, the Sega Mega Drive release attributes the game to Bizarre Creations. A submission document penned by Martyn Chudley featured the name 'Weird Concepts'. A member of staff used a thesaurus on both words and came up with 'Bizarre Creations', which gave them the identity that they were looking for.

In 1993, Martyn Chudley and Mike Waterworth designed cutesy platformer *Wiz 'n' Liz*, which would debut on the Sega Mega Drive before being converted for the Amiga. *Wiz 'n' Liz* sees your wizard having to collect ingredients and partake in a variety of mini-games to rescue the 'wabbits' that have been viciously abducted. It's a unique platformer that doesn't feature any enemies yet the formula works really well. The game, while short, is thoroughly enjoyable and full of charm and also includes a superb two-player mode.

In 1994, the developer would take on the name Bizarre Creations permanently. With a relationship already developed with Psygnosis, the team was offered a contract to develop Formula One titles upon the publisher seeing their concept demo *Slaughter*. Mark Craig joined Bizarre Creations when the team was fairly small and was there up until the studio's closure in 2011.

"I was initially hired as a PC programmer but fairly quickly moved up to a senior and then lead programmer, he reveals' "I also had quite a large role in recruitment and interviewed most of the programmers we hired. I started working there when Bizarre was about 12 people so I initially worked with all the founding members. Throughout the course of my career there I worked with just about everyone!"

## BY THE NUMBERS

**007** James Bond title *Bloodstone* was developed by Bizarre Creations

**3** Standalone games in the *Geometry Wars* series

**4** Games in the *Project Gotham Racing* series

**5** Music tracks available as DLC for *Boom Boom Rocket*

**9** Amount of consoles Bizarre Creations developed for

**17** Licenced tracks featured in *Formula 1 '97*

**10** Music tracks featured in *Boom Boom Rocket*

**4** Cities recreated in Project Gotham Racing (San Francisco, London, Tokyo, New York)

**20** Maximum number of players that could compete online in *Blur*

**130** Amount of vehicles found in *Project Gotham Racing 4*

**800** Cost of Microsoft points to purchase *Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved 2*

**2000** The year *MSR* was released on Dreamcast

**2007** The year Activision acquired Bizarre Creations






BLOODSTONE

### INSTANT EXPERT

**Before becoming Bizarre** Creations, the team were known as 'Raising Hell' and released two titles *The Killing Game Show* and *Wiz And Liz*

**Bizarre Creations was** founded by Martyn Chudley in 1994, with only five people at the company in the beginning

**The team's impressive** Formula One title caught the attention of Sega's Kats Sato which led to them developing *Metropolis Street Racer* for the Dreamcast

**Bizarre Creations developed** a reputation as racing game specialists, having been responsible for *Formula One, Metropolis Street Racer* and the *Project Gotham Racing* series

***Project Gotham Racing*** on Xbox was the spiritual successor to *Metropolis Street Racer*, incorporating the same innovative kudos system

***Geometry Wars: Retro** Evolved* was originally included as a mini-game in *Project Gotham Racing 2* before its popularity leading to it being developed as a full title for Xbox Live

**Richard Jacques was** responsible for the in-game radio soundtrack for *Metropolis Street Racer*

**Bizarre Creations got** to work with Psygnosis, Acclaim, Sony, Sega, Microsoft and Activision throughout its history

**On 26 September** 2007, the company was acquired by Activision

**The company was** closed in 2011 by publisher Activision

As a result of being one of the early members of the team, Mark got to work on licenced title *Formula One* on Sony PlayStation. "A lot of time was spent looking at how the game was presented on the TV coverage; the key was trying to make it look as familiar as possible to the players, he continues. "We were fortunate to have a crazy genius as our main technical programmer and he managed to make one of the most powerful 3D engines that was ever written for the PS1. The artists all had detailed plans of the vehicles & tracks. They also had hours of races recorded on VHS tapes that they studied in great detail. I think they also went on a few research trips to see the tracks for themselves."

Asides from being visually impressive and true to the original sport, opposing drivers seemed to have their own personality on the racing tracks. "It was a long time ago but I seem to remember that the AI was based around splines generated by people playing the game," explains Mark Craig. "I remember that one of the biggest challenges was getting all the cars to go round the track without getting in the way of each other. There were also some personality settings for the drivers to give them slightly different behaviour."

Such research paid off, as the end result was a realistic and intelligent racing title

> **"The look of the game was intentionally left undecided until we had signed a publisher"**
>
> MATT CAVANAGH ON THE STYLE OF THE CLUB

that appealed to Formula One and racing game fans alike. The game's release in 1996 catapulted the game into the charts and resulted in being the best selling game in Europe for the year. Impressed by such results, work began on the follow up *F1 '97*. This included new features like an in-game cockpit view and racing additions including flags, changing weather conditions and potential car failure. Improved over its predecessor, *F1 '97* was once again a hit among critics and was a best selling title in the UK.

For a time, the game was withdrawn from shops due to legality issues with FIA (Formula One's governing body). FIA was unhappy with the use of its logo upon the cover of the game and although the title was withdrawn from stores and the logo was removed, a court case was pursued. There was also an issue with the use of name and image of Williams driver Jacques Villeneuve which he had copyrighted, so this was then replaced with a silhouette image and the name "Williams numberone" was used instead (Driverone Williams appears within the game menu).

## The Dreamcast Effect

Undeterred by such legal technicalities, Psygnosis was all intent on signing Bizarre Creations to develop a further five *Formula One* titles but the developer received a better offer from Sega. Sega had been impressed with the *Formula One* games and Kats Sato had been given the task of finding out who was behind them. At ECTS '97, he pulled out the power cable of the PlayStation running the game so he could see the start-up credits. After a meeting with Sega Europe's CEO, Kazutoshi Miyake, Bizarre Creations accepted the offer to create a flagship racing title for the Sega Dreamcast.

Lee Carter, one of the artists who worked on *Metropolis Street Racer,* remembers joining the company well. "I was hugely into my old Amiga computer and Deluxe Paint 4 while at school, but at age sixteen I went to art college and then



» [Mega Drive] *Wiz 'n' Liz* was an excellent game, delivering fast-paced action and cute visuals.



» [Playstation 2] *Viggo's Revenge* boasted a cel-shaded look and packed in content not found in the Dreamcast game.


» [Dreamcast] Thousands of photographs were taken to re-create the cities in *Metropolis Street Racer* to great effect.

university. Seven years later after doing illustrations for various magazines and RPG companies, I began to see jobs for artists. I hadn't had any computer training and in fact, I was pretty much a traditional artist in terms of materials so I thought all this computer technical stuff was well beyond my capabilities. After my initial phone call to a friend who worked at Sony Liverpool, which was in the old Psygnosis building, I was told that they didn't have any jobs. However, a smaller company just across the road may have had something there. Twenty minutes later one of Bizarre Creations artists phoned me up and set up an interview for me. Basically I was told as I didn't know any 3D but had strong drawing skills that I would be hired and put in a cupboard till I was needed. I was the twenty-first employee, so it was all still quite cosy at the time."

Lee was responsible for many of the textures for the cities and vehicles in *MSR*. "Creating city textures was a relatively simple process as we wanted photo realism so it was a no-brainer to use photo reference. Unfortunately, we didn't have digital cameras at the time so all the photos had to be scanned in. The photos were skewed and straightened out in order to make them ready for applying to the 3D model. The best bit was removing random people who had strayed into shot, the hardest bit was removing trees and anything else that obscured the building façade."

## LIVING THE DREAM

Several of our interviewees have a lot of love for the Dreamcast console as a development platform. "As a 2D artist the Dreamcast was a joy with a full 256 textures, which meant you could hold a lot more detail and didn't have to rely too much on repeated generic brick textures at a much lower resolution," recalls Lee Carter. Mark Craig is equally complimentary. "I still have a soft spot for the Dreamcast, it was a nice little system to develop for and its GPU was really good."

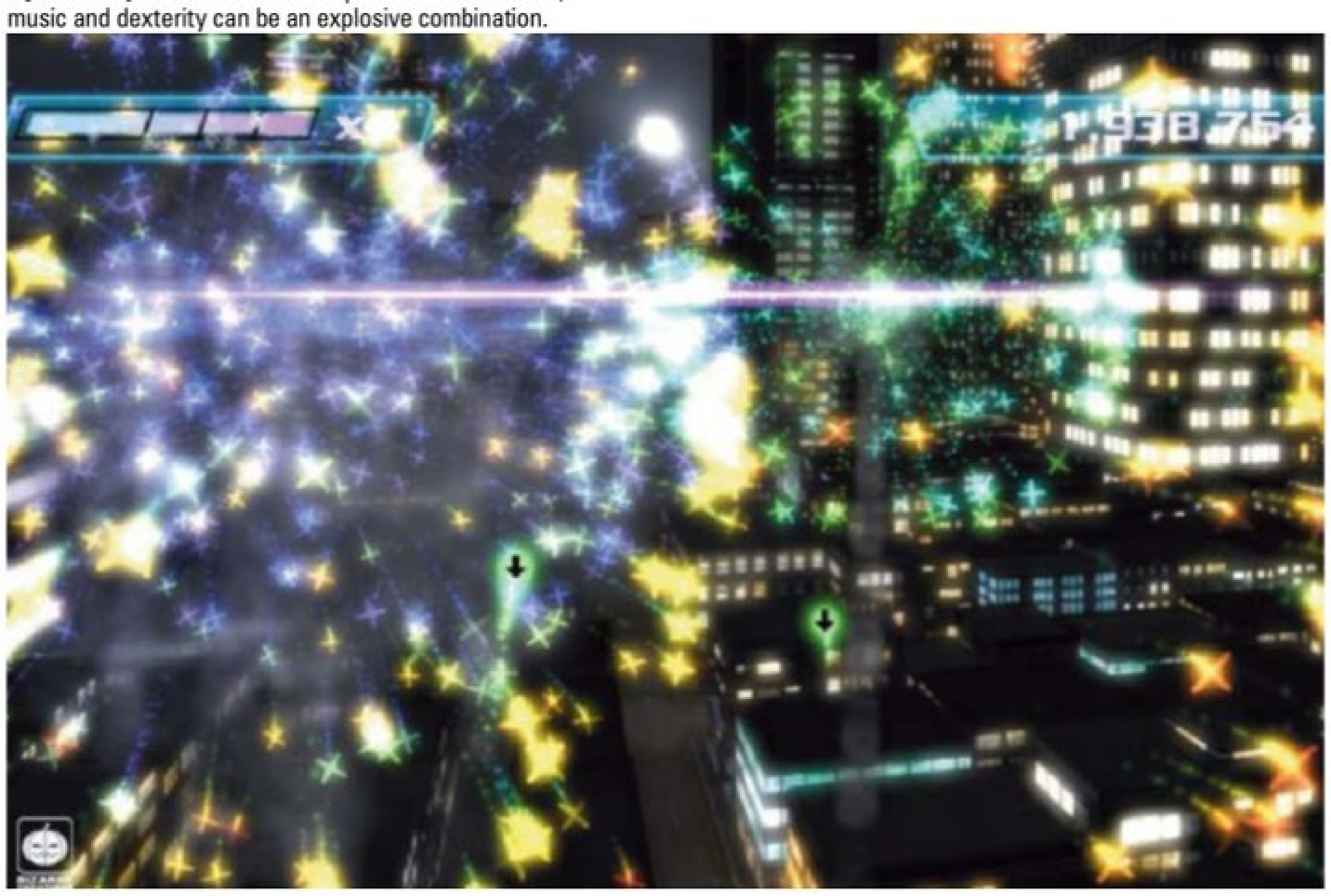



*MSR* entered a troubled development process, going from a potential launch title to being delayed numerous times before its final release in the year 2000, right at the time when Sega began to withdraw support for the console. There were many reasons as to why the game was delayed so heavily. "*MSR* was huge in terms of environments and artwork needed, the team wasn't big enough so we took more and more people on" remembers Lee Carter. "We had programmers leave and other programmers having to take over and a lot of code was rewritten after a bad demo. But we got there in the end."

Around the same time, a separate team led by Mark Craig and Jeff worked on *Fur Fighters*, an cartoony first-person shooter/platformer that took inspiration from games like *Fury Of The Furries*, Rare titles, and *Wonderboy III: The Dragon's Trap*. "The game was originally going to be 30 per cent bigger with four levels on each world and two extra worlds. It was huge as it was but if we stuck to the original plan it would have been gargantuan! The biggest weakness of the game comes from the fact that we aimed too high and in some places the game isn't as polished or refined as we would like "adds Mark. The team would

## TIMELINE

- **1988** MARTYN CHUDLEY FOUNDS RAISING HELL SOFTWARE
- **1990** *THE KILLING GAME SHOW* IS RELEASED
- **1993** WIZ 'N' LIZ IS RELEASED
- **1994** COMPANY RENAMED BIZARRE CREATIONS
- **1996** TEAM SIGNED BY PSYGNOSIS TO WORK ON FORMULA ONE
- **1997** BIZARRE CREATIONS RELEASES *FORMULA ONE '97*. BIZARRE CREATIONS ARE APPROACHED BY SEGA TO CREATE A RACING TITLE FOR THE DREAMCAST
- **2000** *METROPOLIS STREET RACER* IS RELEASED AFTER SEVERAL DELAYS AND DURING THE DREAMCAST'S LAST CHRISTMAS. *FUR FIGHTERS* IS ALSO RELEASED FOR THE DREAMCAST



» [Xbox 360] *Boom Boom Rocket* proves that fireworks, music and dexterity can be an explosive combination.




**"We didn't have digital cameras at the time so all the photos had to be scanned"** LEE CARTER ON METROPOLIS STREET RACER

later release a remake for the PlayStation 2 called *Viggo's Revenge*, which included features not found in the original as well as whole new look. "Sony wanted something that looked technically more advanced than the Dreamcast version. Our tech programmer had come up with a cel-shader that looked very nice as a little side project when we were doing the PC version."

"As we were making *MSR*, Bizarre's other team were hard at work making *Fur Fighters* which relied on hand-drawn cartoony textures" recalls Lee Carter. "We got lot of stick for using photos as the artists on that team had to spend a lot more time drawing and designing textures, so we had it relatively easy compared to them. Much easier when you have source material and a real city to copy than it is designing environments and textures from scratch."

## Next generation

Although the Dreamcast era didn't pay off financially, it did allow them to enter into a relationship with Microsoft who set them to work on the *Project Gotham Racing* series. "I was a lead designer at Bizarre Creations," says Matt Cavanagh. "My role involved overseeing the game design as well as being a leader and mentor for the game's design team. I would also oversee the implementation of the key game-play features. I worked with pretty much everyone who Bizarre employed at some time or another. When I first joined the company there were little over 40 employees, and I saw that swell to over 200 throughout my time there.

"The game design was worked on by the whole team. Ideas were formulated in meetings and then those ideas proved or disproved through prototyping. It's important that the team feels that it owns its game." Much like *MSR*, photo-research was required. "Yeah, the artists on *PGR* would take thousands upon thousands of photos of the cities they were modelling," continues Matt. A sequel would follow on the Xbox and went on to improve on the original in every aspect.

Upon the release of the Xbox 360, Bizarre Creations continued to prosper ▶

**2001** REVAMPED VERSION OF *FUR FIGHTERS: VIGGO'S REVENGE* IS RELEASED FOR PLAYSTATION 2. *PROJECT GOTHAM RACING* IS RELEASED FOR THE XBOX

**2002** *TREASURE PLANET* IS RELEASED FOR GBA AND PS2

**2003** *PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2* IS RELEASED ON XBOX.

**2006** *PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 3* IS RELEASED ON THE XBOX. *GEOMETRY WARS: RETRO EVOLVED* ARRIVES AS A FULL GAME ON XBOX LIVE

**2007** *BOOM BOOM ROCKET* HITS XBOX LIVE. *PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 4* IS ALSO RELEASED WHILE *GEOMETRY WARS: GALAXIES* HITS NINTENDO DS AND WII

**2008** *GEOMETRY WARS: RETRO EVOLVED 2* HITS XBOX LIVE. *THE CLUB* IS ALSO RELEASED

**2010** *BLUR* AND *BLOODSTONE* ARE RELEASED ON PLAYSTATION 3, XBOX 360 AND PC. CLOSURE OF THE COMPANY IS ANNOUNCED BY ACTIVISION UNLESS A POTENTIAL BUYER IS FOUND

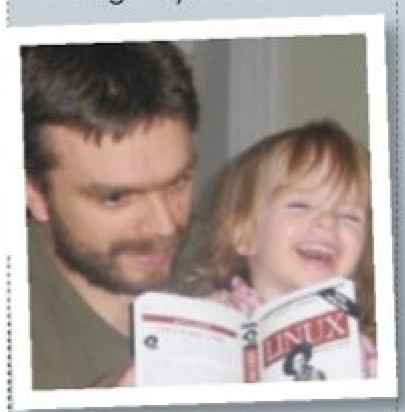
**2011** BIZARRE CREATIONS IS CLOSED BY ACTIVISION

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



**Adam Dickinson**

Upon the closure of Bizarre Creations, Adam Dickinson sought a new direction having spent thirteen years within the videogame development industry. Now he is the production director of Mi (www.wearemi.com) who produce cinematic trailers and marketing materials for the games industry and agency brands.



**Mark Craig**

When Bizarre Creations closed, Mark Craig was approached by Pete Wallace (former acting studio head of Bizarre) with the invitation to start up their own independent games studio based in Liverpool. As a result, Lucid Games was set up and Mark Craig works alongside Jeff Lewis and several other former Bizarre Creations employees. To date, *Travel Bug*, a free app for PlayStation Vita and *Pixel Smash*, a game for iOS and Android have been released, with several other games in development that should be released later this year. Mark Craig also released the iOS port of *Fur Fighters* under Muffin Games Ltd.

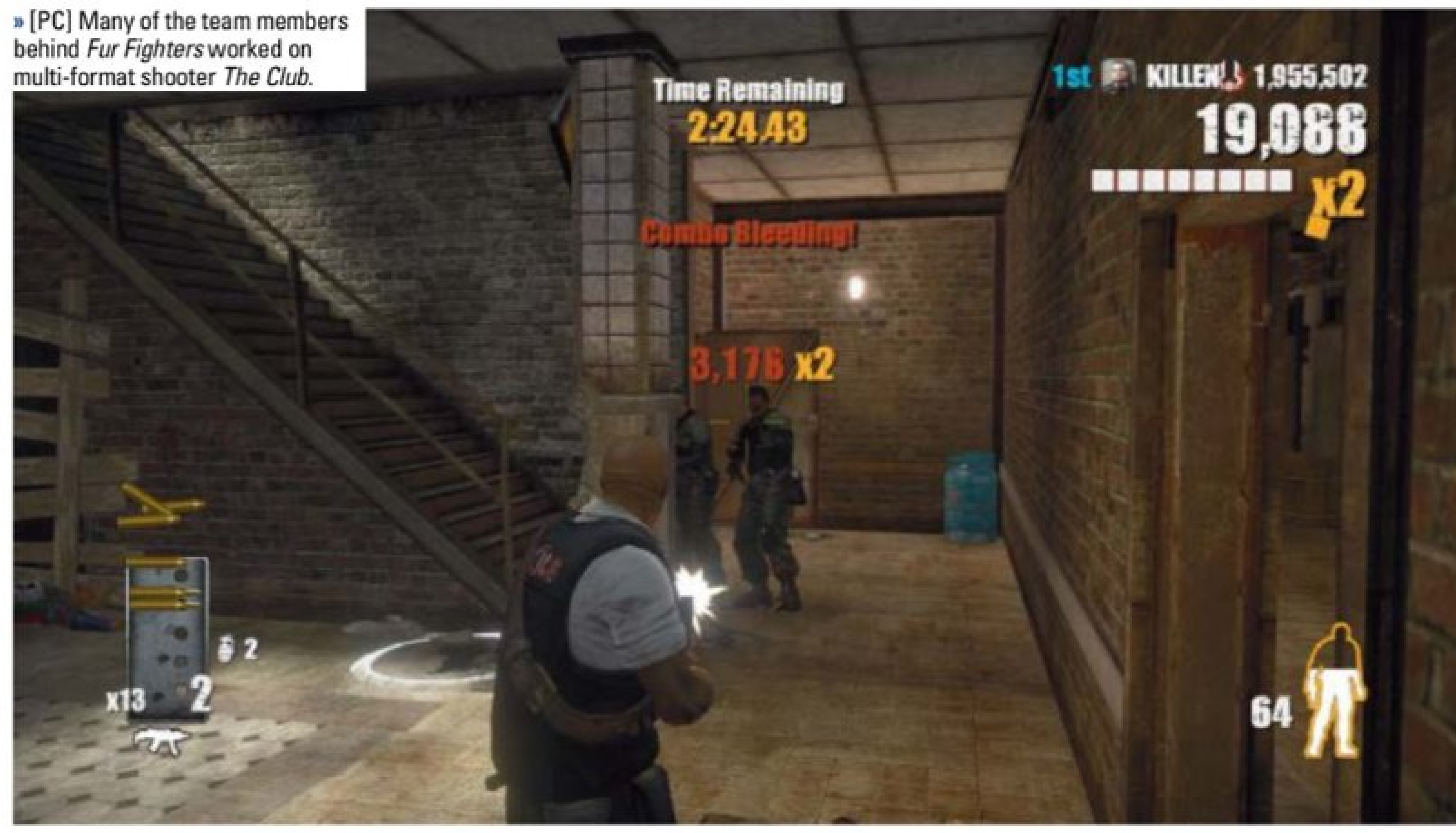
**Lee Carter**

Having already been freelancing in his spare time for print media as an illustrator for *2000AD*, Games Workshop, Imagine FX and Boom Studios, it was only natural to continue his work on a full time basis. Lee Carter continues to illustrate works for *2000AD* as well as on concept art for movies, kids books and advertising.



**Matt Cavanagh**

With more than twenty years of videogame development experience under his belt, Matt Cavanagh went on to form his own family-run company called Totem Games. Founded in June 2011 and based in Chester, the company focuses on creating small games for mobile devices which so far have included *SpaceOff*, a unique retro shooter for two players on the iOS and Android devices, and *Free Quiz*, a completely free game that can be downloaded from the iTunes store.



» [PC] Many of the team members behind *Fur Fighters* worked on multi-format shooter *The Club*.

## ☐ ALL A BLUR



Earlier this year, footage of an unannounced racing title that was in development was released online by Chris Davie, a former artist with Bizarre Creations, showcasing a re-imagining of a Brighton race track and a new one in Dubai highlighting a new game engine. On his own blog he wrote "by the end it had gotten to about an alpha level, there was some really nice things in there, though we still needed to add a load of destructible objects inside the shopping mall and tram station we drive through in the video, and inside the hotel lobby of the building we drive on the outside of here." Adam Dickinson confirmed he had been working on the sequel when asked about the difficulties in creating the futuristic style of *Blur.* "It was the same on *Blur 2* (unreleased) the constraints were difficult and some of the artists who relied on pure photographs only had to up their game."

▶ with games such as *Project Gotham Racing 3* and 4 hitting the console along with several other side projects including the quirky *Boom Boom Rocket* and the sublime *Geometry Wars* titles.

With a relationship still strong with Sega, the concept of *The Club* came about. "*The Club* started out as a quirky prototype where players had to shoot enemies against the clock. The characters at this point were modelled to look like they were made out of cardboard boxes – purely intentionally because this forced us to nail the gameplay without setting a look for the game. The look of the game was intentionally left undecided until we had signed a publisher to distribute the game, which meant that they could be heavily involved in this stage of the development," says Matt.

Lee Carter has fond memories of working on *The Club.* "Designing environments and characters was far more up my street, mainly dare I say it, because I'm not really a car fan. But shooting bad guys is, well, fun! Plus the mechanics of The Club being almost race-like, made it very replayable and competitive amongst the development team."

Mark Craig also worked on Bizarre's excellent and greatly underrated shooter (it's a firm favourite in **Retro Gamer** towers). "This was also a third-person shooter of sorts, so it wasn't a massive leap," he explains. "As well as the racing team we always had a character game team. The initial idea came from wanting to do a shooter that was competitive and not bogged down by a story with loads of cut scenes." *The Club* was released in 2008 on PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 and PC. It had great music by Richard Jacques and Jesper Kyd. *The Club* received favourable reviews and a pretty decent reception from gamers.



### Activate

In 2007, the company was purchased by Activision, a decision that invoked a mixed response from its employees. "I was a bit apprehensive about the company being bought," says Mark. "We'd been independent for a long time and the thought of being owned by a massive company felt a bit daunting. I don't think anything could have been done differently except not selling out, of course, but hindsight is a wonderful thing and it felt like the right choice at the time."

On the other hand, Adam Dickinson felt that the move was necessary to survive. "I think it was a great deal and a great move – Bizarre wouldn't have survived at 200 staff otherwise. Ultimately, it was a big team and the games needed to deliver – the budgets were big for development and small for marketing, also releasing another *Bond* game at the same time in the same week as *Call Of Duty* wasn't great," recalls Adam Dickinson, and he wasn't alone in his concerns. "I started to get worried when I noticed how big the company was becoming" says Matt. "Bizarre seemed to be hiring like crazy during the last year or so."

Nevertheless, everyone got on well at the company and work began on the next two projects, *Blur* and *Bloodstone. Blur* was a well crafted racer that blended arcade racing with power-ups, but although it was well received by the critics, its conflicting styles polarised gamers. *Bloodstone* was a competent game that was highly polished but received mixed reviews. Neither game performed as expected at retail although there were signs that trouble was brewing.

"I think the first warning sign was when *Blur* got pulled by Activision just before it was about to be submitted and they effectively rebooted it," remembers Mark. "I really got worried when *Blur* was released and it dropped out of the charts very quickly."

In October that year it was announced that Bizarre Creations would be up for sale. "I found out my wife was pregnant with

**"I got worried when Blur was released and it dropped out of the charts very quickly"**
MARK CRAIG ON BIZARRE CREATIONS' FINAL YEAR



» [Xbox 360] The minigame found in *PGR2* went on to better things as a Xbox Live game.



our third child the day before they told us they were likely to close the studio, it would be fair to say that it came as a bit of a shock!" continues Mark. "During the last three months everyone behaved in a very professional and dignified manner. People put CVs together, learned new skills and even made little games of their own. I think people's conduct was a real credit to the company and I think our composure and dignity took Activision by surprise.

"On the last day we brought in some consoles and played through Bizarre's back catalogue, I remember feeling proud at what we'd accomplished in our seventeen years. Finally I put together a box of personal items which all contain memories from Bizarre. I still find it difficult to go through the box as it makes me sad thinking about everything that was lost. One day when I'm ready I know I'll open it again and it'll put a smile on my face."

Lee Carter also remembers the moment well. "The games industry was quite slow at the time and you really needed a hit in order to keep the spreadsheets happy. The final few months were strange in the fact that we had nothing to do but still needed to be at work. Activision were fantastic in the fact we had job fairs organised and a chance to work abroad in other Activision owned companies."

Matt also felt it strange. "Everyone was still coming into work, but I think we knew in our hearts that there was little chance of the company being saved as we'd swelled our ranks so much and so the company's overheads must have become huge." Sadly they were right as Bizarre Creations shut its doors the following year.

## End of an Era

Yet the disbanding of Bizarre Creations hasn't spelt the end to the talented individuals that made the company so memorable. Aside from Lucid Games, Totem Games and Muffin Games that our interviewees went on to found, other splinter companies rose from the ashes. Curly Rocket, HogRocket and Grubby Hands were all founded by former employees of Bizarre Creations. Playground Games went on to hire many ex-Bizarre Creation staff, who worked on and released the excellent *Forza Horizon* last year. Sumo Digital, who has established itself with racing titles such as *OutRun Arcade* and *Sonic And Sega All-Star Racing*, and its innovative sequel.

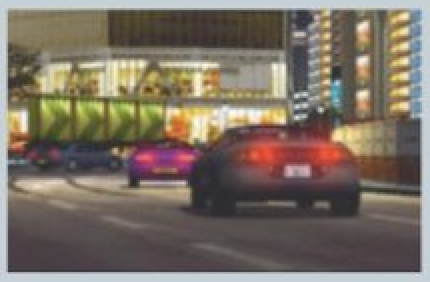
"For me a lot of friendships were made over the 13 years I was there and that was the saddest thing," reminisces Lee. "I decided to leave the games industry as I really didn't think it was for me any more, too many suits. Thankfully a lot of the skills I learned while at Bizarre helped me get back into illustration and comic book art."

Mark also has fond memories of the company. "I knew I wanted to work for them as soon as I first spoke to them on the phone and I enjoyed the whole sixteen years I spent there." "The people were amazing, some real stars, some of whom I still see and call friends," adds Adam Dickinson. "The best day for me as a *Bond* fan was being part of the world wide première, meeting Barbara Broccoli and sitting in the DB5 from *Goldfinger*." Bizarre Creations may no longer exist in name, but its input continues to be admired throughout the industry.

## ☐ SIX OF THE BEST



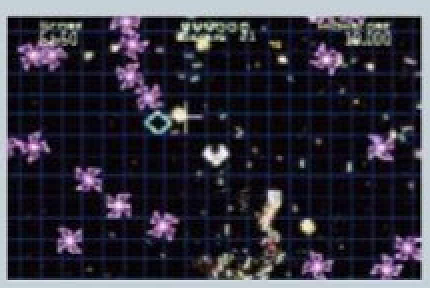
### Formula One [1996]
The original PlayStation release was a fantastic feat. Not only did it feature the official tracks and commentary from Murray Walker himself, it had realistic handling, authentic graphics and sophisticated opponent intelligence.



### Metropolis Street Racer [2000]
*MSR* is a staggering achievement for the Dreamcast by featuring tracks that were re-created purely from photographs. The innovative kudos system rewarded clever and skilful driving.



### Fur Fighters [2000]
Featuring an cast of critters intent on rescuing their offspring, *Fur Fighters* is a fun title that blends platforming, puzzle solving and shooting elements. Although it suffered from camera issues, unique visuals create a compelling package.



### Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved 2 [2008]
Featuring six modes including Deadline, Waves, King, Evolved, Pacifism and Sequence, each one took the 2D shooter formula and gave it a twist to create a very compelling score attack title.



### Blur [2010]
Although it divided players with its futuristic visual style and power-up weaponry within a world of arcade racing, the unique social networking features linking with Facebook and Twitter were a nice touch.



### Project Gotham Racing 4 [2007]
Saving the best till last, *Project Gotham Racing 4* introduced bikes to the racing roster and the concept of real-time changing weather conditions showcasing the Xbox 360's capabilities.

## ☐ ONE TO AVOID



### Treasure Planet [2002]
With a company of Bizarre Creation's pedigree, it's difficult to find games to avoid as such, just ones that don't quite reach their usual high standards. *Treasure Planet* is a well made title, but doesn't accomplish anything original, focusing instead on standard platform fare.

## ☐ LET THE FUR FLY

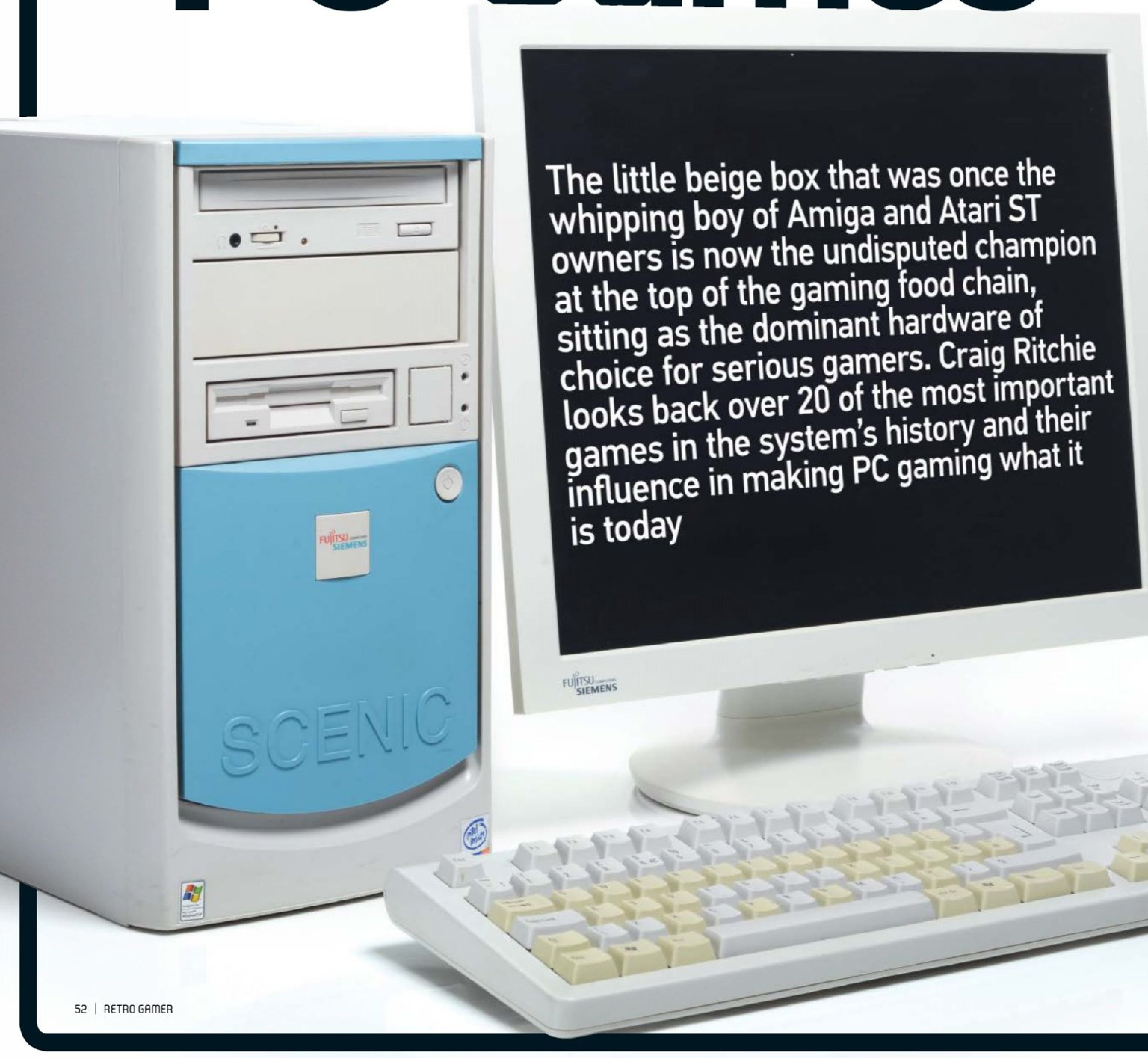
Although Bizarre Creations was sold to Activision, one of the franchises that didn't make the jump was the cult classic *Fur Fighters*, something the original creators used to their advantage. "When Martyn sold Bizarre Creations to Activision, he didn't sell them the rights to *Fur Fighters*, he sold them instead to Jeff Lewis who was the chief designer of the game (for a fiver)," recalls Mark Craig who worked extensively on the Dreamcast original's game design, enemy behaviour and game code. "I thought about bringing the game back in some form after I contributed to an article in **games™**. After Bizarre had closed I realised that it would be technically possible to port the game over to iOS, I talked to Jeff about this and he thought it was a good idea. I worked on the port in my spare time very slowly but I was very determined and I didn't give up." Released in July last year as a Muffingames Ltd creation, the game is a highly accomplished port that can be downloaded from the App store as *Fur Fighters: Viggo* on Glass for free or for the princely sum of 69p to remove those pesky adverts.






» [PS3] *Bloodstone* looked the part and combined a variety of gameplay styles with mixed results.

# 20 Killer PC Games




The little beige box that was once the whipping boy of Amiga and Atari ST owners is now the undisputed champion at the top of the gaming food chain, sitting as the dominant hardware of choice for serious gamers. Craig Ritchie looks back over 20 of the most important games in the system's history and their influence in making PC gaming what it is today



# Baldur's Gate

**Released: 1998 | Published by: Black Isle Studios/Interplay Entertainment | Developed by: BioWare**

The PC gaming world needed *Baldur's Gate*. This epic-scale *Dungeons & Dragons* RPG came along in a market flooded with generic FPS and RTS titles and used the power of the PC for something entirely unexpected. It brought a great story in the *Forgotten Realms* high-fantasy setting, excellent character development and its innovative real-time-with-pause combat to deliver the finest role-playing experience the PC had seen. *Baldur's Gate* and its sequel are often cited by fans of the genre as the best RPGs of all time, and their legacy was recently affirmed in the *Enhanced Edition* re-release.





# Dungeon Keeper

**Released: 1997 | Published by: Electronic Arts | Developed by: Bullfrog Productions**

*Dungeon Keeper* emerged from the same stables as the unforgettable *Populous, Theme Park* and *Syndicate*, and was the culmination of years of honing the god game to the point of perfection. We chose this particular title from Peter Molyneux's incredible portfolio as it brought together so much of what we'd enjoyed in previous examples of the genre, but threw heroism on its head by making you the evil lord of a dungeon, with minions and monsters to do your bidding while protecting your own treasure stash from wannabe heroes. And let's face it – being bad can be so much fun sometimes. An original title with beautiful graphics and simple controls, its influence and lasting appeal cannot be overstated.



## Trent Oster, Baldur's Gate

**Was there any point at which you felt that what you were developing would go on to be one of the most defining PC games in history?**

The development of *Baldur's Gate* was a long process and it wasn't until late in the process all the parts came together. The first time I was able to sit down and play through a fully designed area I realised we were on to something. As the game moved closer to completion you could really get a feel for how large the story was and how rich the rules system was. I recall the hairs on my neck standing up the first time I made it through to the end villain and my run down to James Ohlen's office where I had to show him how I killed the mage Samej (James backwards) with an epic backstab.

**What new concepts and features did the game bring to the table?**

I think the use of pre-rendered backgrounds; up to that time all RPGs had been hand drawn sprites and 320x200 resolution. I also think the 3D art package pre-rendering of the characters gave them a much more realistic look and feel than had been attempted before. The pause and play mechanic, allowing you to play the slower parts of the game more like an RTS while still offering a great tactical depth through pausing was also a huge feature. The final major feature was probably the depth of the rules implementation. There were so many possible ways to tackle any scenario based on who your party members were and what abilities they had. I think the last is the real reason for its longevity.

**What do you feel are some of the major contributions that *Baldur's Gate* made to the role-playing genre on the PC?**

I think the pause and play mechanic was a huge evolution. Having recently played *FTL*, which has the same space-bar pause it is obvious how far reaching the pause for tactical consideration has become a core game element. I think the interesting NPC characters added a great deal, showing you could execute outside narrow stereotypes.

**Can you still see *Baldur's Gate*'s influence in new releases today?**

Pause and play in *FTL* comes to mind. The character depth and relationships in major action games. Character interaction in the *Mass Effect* series. I think these can be traced back to *Baldur's Gate.*




# Day Of The Tentacle



**Released: 1993 | Published by: LucasArts | Developed by: In-house**
While adventures like *King's Quest* may have paved the way and *Monkey Island* took great strides in improving the formula, it was *Day Of The Tentacle* that upped the ante and perfected the graphic adventure genre. In a return to the characters and locations of Ron Glbert's *Maniac Mansion*, Dave Grossman and Tim Schafer's brilliant sequel brought a cartoon art style, excellent fully-voiced dialogue, genuinely funny humour, devilish puzzles and the novel element of solving puzzles by having to send items – through Portaloo time-machines – to characters in different eras. This is adventure gaming at its finest, and still plays as good as ever today.

## Dave Grossman, Day Of The Tentacle



**Was there any point where you felt that what you were developing would go on to be one of the most defining PC adventure games ever?**
As soon as I figure out how to predict things like that I am going to make a TON of money. So, no, of course not! And the reaction was positive when we released it, but even then you can never tell what people will think twenty years later, you just have to wait and see. I was fairly confident early on that it was going to be good, though, probably from about the time people started creating all the art. Not only did it look fantastic, having little cartoon people on the screen who act out your whims and express comic timing is remarkably inspiring.

***Day Of The Tentacle* was built in a mature game engine in a genre that had already seen the massively popular *Monkey Island* games – what do you think separated it from its peers?**
Plenty of games have been just as funny or clever as *Day Of The Tentacle*; I think the main thing that makes it work as well as it does is its strong unified vision. Art, animation, writing, music, and so on, all working toward the common goal of making you feel like you're a character in a Chuck Jones cartoon. The puzzle design even gets in on the act, in that you have to think like a cartoon character in order to succeed.

**Which other titles at the time influenced the development of *Day Of The Tentacle*? Even though they were the competition, was there anything Sierra was doing that you learned from?**
Peter Chan was experimenting with a new approach to creating the scenes that was a particular hybrid of scanned and computer art, his own idea, but I'm pretty sure the main reason we owned a scanner in the first place was that Sierra had one (they were new and really expensive back then). Also *Day Of The Tentacle* wound up being a full-voiced talkie game, a decision we made mid-way through production, mainly because full voice was a game-changing thing that was becoming feasible now that enough people had CD-ROM drives, but also partly because Sierra was doing it. Think *Singin' In The Rain*.

**Might we see a return to the mansion?**
You've left out a critical piece of the equation, that being the recent acquisition of LucasArts by Disney. Along with which went the intellectual property rights to *Maniac Mansion*. If only *I* owned those rights... Maybe if I had a time machine, I could go back before 1985 and file – hey, isn't there a puzzle in *Day Of The Tentacle* about this?

# SimCity

**Released: 1989 | Published by: Maxis | Developed by: In-house**
Who would have thought that *work* – running a town and dealing with all the obstacles, stresses and annoyances from that – would result not only in a tremendously popular game, but spawn spin-offs and sequels for the next 25 years? Well, the finished product of this map-editing job-simulator greatly defied how it may have read on paper, and we have Will Wright and the smarts of the crew at Maxis to thank for it. The great innovation of adding natural disasters and specific scenarios such as a catastrophic earthquake or attack from a Godzilla-like monster were sheer brilliance. It was a simple idea that has left an outstanding legacy, *SimCity* having been ported to every system imaginable, its different versions and follow-ons enjoyed by gamers all over the world for decades.




# Ultima VII

**Released: 1992 | Published by: Origin Systems**
**Developed by: In-house**
Richard Garriot's classic fantasy RPG series reached its zenith with *Ultima VII: The Black Gate* and its semi-sequel, *Serpent Isle*, with non-linear gameplay, classic characters, memorable locations and a highly detailed art-style all coming together perfectly. It was a masterpiece again showing how much Origin was pushing the performance envelope – but its contributions to gaming are much greater than its technical achievements and being an outstanding example of its genre.

Once you stop to appreciate just how much is happening in the living, breathing world of Brittania, you can begin to see an open-world role-play game many years ahead of its time. It's a must-play for any RPG fan, made all the easier by the Exult engine which allows it to be enjoyed on a host of modern systems.





# Dune 2







**Released: 1992 | Published by: Virgin Interactive**
**Developed by: Westwood Studios**

While *Command & Conquer*, *Warcraft* and *StarCraft* may have gone on to bigger and better things, *Dune 2* holds the immortal place as being the grandfather of the PC's radically addictive combat RTS genre. Indeed, all of the elements that are synonymous with its successor titles today were present here: multiple playable factions with varying units and unique abilities, base-building and expansion, and the need to juggle economic, military and infrastructural considerations in real time. Granted, it was an unexpected use of the licence for Frank Herbert's science fiction universe, but the end result was fantastic. Westwood Studios may have refined the genre with *Command & Conquer*, but *Dune 2* is the genre's ground zero.



# Thief

**Released: 1998**
**Published by: Eidos Interactive**
**Developed by: Looking Glass Studios**

The idea of improving the sensory experience of the gamer is nothing new or groundbreaking, but adding the same thing *for non-player characters* and pulling it off as brilliantly as Looking Glass did with *Thief* was entirely unprecedented. An absolute milestone in PC gaming, it forced players to become aware of the noise of their footsteps, how visible they were in varying levels of light, pioneering stealth gaming on the system. *Thief* also took great strides in replayability by allowing players to define their own experience of the game through how they chose to approach the various challenges. Its impact on PC gaming and influence on titles since shows just how significant its contributions were to artificial intelligence in gaming.



# King's Quest: Quest For The Crown

**Released: 1983 | Published by: IBM/Sierra On-Line**
**Developed by: Sierra On-Line**

The text adventure genre's first visual leap was to include static images to add a graphical element for players. Ken and Roberta Williams took this a step further by creating an on-screen character that could move around the screen – and the '3D' graphical adventure game was born. In a blend of medieval fantasy and fairy-tale magic, *King's Quest*'s puzzles ranged from straightforward to downright cruel, and unexpected deaths could end Graham's adventure in a host of horrible ways. Still, *King's Quest* was unlike anything we'd seen before, and while it may not have been the best of the lot by the end of Sierra's early reign over the genre, it was a true first – a stepping stone for the genre that swept the gaming world by storm.




**"King's Quest's puzzles ranged from straightforward to downright cruel"**

## Joe Bostic, Dune 2



**While you were working on *Dune 2* was there any point in the process at which you felt that what you were developing would go on to be one of the most defining PC games in history?**

While working on *Dune 2*, we didn't really know what we had at first. Brett Sperry and I knew we wanted a game that combined elements of several games we were playing at the time. *Populous*, for the real-time gameplay aspect. *Civilization*, for the strategy aspect. *Herzog Zwei* (Genesis game), for the fast pacing.

Our first playable version had combat vehicles and structures fighting on *Dune*. The theoretical goals were met, but it was missing something. That something was the economic game. Once we added spice harvesting to gain credits to purchase structures and units, the magic appeared.

This is what tied the elements of the game together and served as the foundation for future RTS games. Of course, at the time, we didn't know it would become a defining game for a new genre. That is something that only comes with hindsight, but at the time we did know it was darn fun.

**What can you tell us about the impact that *Dune 2* has had on the computer gaming landscape, paving the way for *Command & Conquer* and the many titles that it clearly inspired?**

I think *Dune 2* impacted the gaming world by demonstrating that real-time combat combined with base-building and economic resource management can result in a compelling gameplay style. This style was given a name – Real-Time Strategy. You can thank Brett Sperry for the name as Virgin Interactive wanted to call it a Strategy game, but it was Brett that insisted "real-time" be added. And the rest is history.

**Is there anything you learned from developing *Dune 2* that you still apply to the games you make today?**

It would be that there is no substitute for the creativity and flexibility potential of a small team. As projects became larger with big budgets and many many team members, it became harder to experiment and develop the game in an organic manner. It is exciting to see a resurgence of small teams with the advent of tablet, mobile, and web platforms. I think the future will show that the most intriguing surprises will come from this area of the game industry.



## Robyn Miller, Myst

**While simple by today's standards, *Myst* took things in new directions from what we'd previously seen in PC gaming. Where did you get the idea to use that kind of interface and playing style?**

The ideas behind the game really came into fruition in the products we created before *Myst*. That's where we created the interface. In the first game we ever made, *Manhole*, Rand sent the development system to me and said "Hey, let's make a children's book where you're on one page and you turn to the next page, and things can move and you can click on things to make them do things." When I started working on it, the first thing I did was draw a manhole. Then it became a very simple matter of me wanting to explore the place I was creating. I wanted to explore the environment in a non-linear way, so I built buttons to control movement, and that's how that basic interface was created. It was a very organic process.

**What role did CD-ROMs play in the game's popularity – or vice versa?**

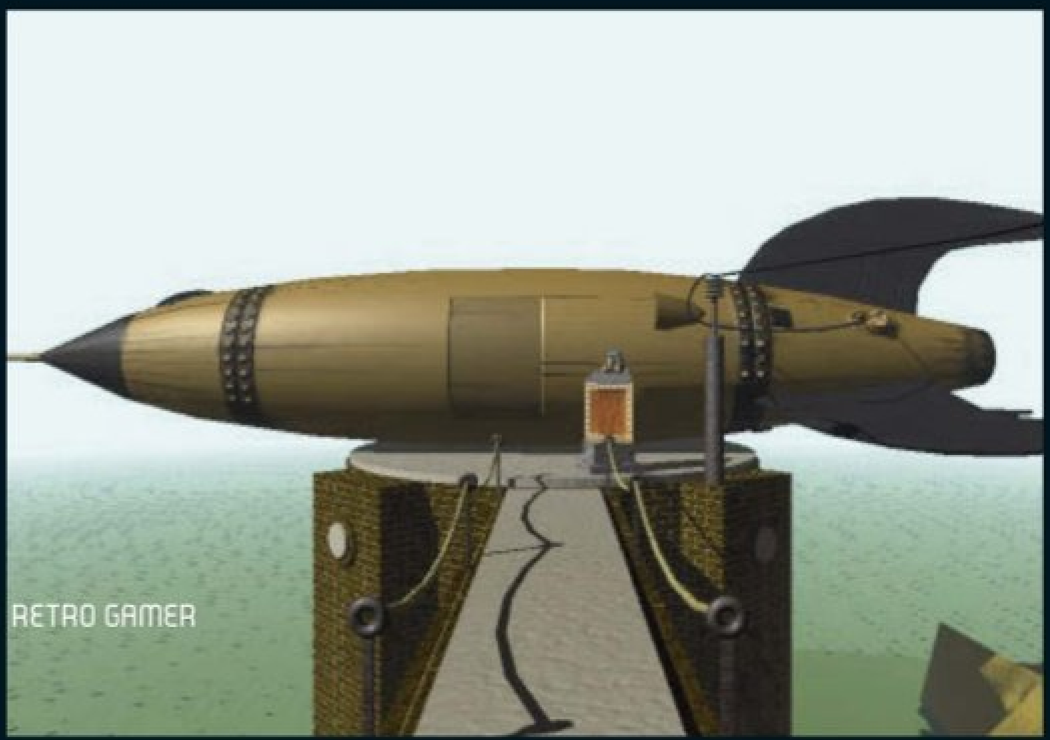
CD-ROMs were actually not popular when we started on it, and largely for that reason we did not think it was going to be a success. It was after *Myst* was released that CD-ROM sales really started to pick up, and that was a real relief! In fact, I think *Myst* helped sell CD-ROMs because at the time, for a lot of people there was nothing to do with them – there was nothing to play on their CD-ROMs, generally speaking.

**What were some of the challenges that you faced during the development of *Myst*?**

There were a lot of things. Even when we started out, we didn't know for sure that we were going to do the game in 3D using CG products to do the graphics. Our previous games had all been hand-drawn, and we thought we'd do it that way. Then I experimented trying to draw this more sophisticated place, which could have been possible, but it just wasn't what we wanted so we went through this whole process of wondering how we were going to create the graphics. Photoshop was primitive back then, and I remember trying to paint in Photoshop and pulling my hair out thinking 'What have we gotten ourselves into?!' [laughs].

**When the game went to market, did you have any inkling that it would be as influential as it was?**

Oh I didn't have that idea *five* years after, that people would still be talking about it. We never expected it. I wouldn't dare to guess who it has influenced; the only thing I *know* is when someone has come to me and said "*Myst* influenced me", and I know the creators of *Lost* said that *Myst* was a real influence in some respects. It was also inducted into the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and that was incredibly exciting. That's been the greatest honour to befall the game, and for me personally. For it to have an influence in popular culture – the thing you create – is immensely cool!







# Myst

**Released: 1993**
**Published by: Brøderbund**
**Developed by: Cyan**

Truly a product of its time, by today's standards *Myst* is an incredibly simplistic game that deft hands could accurately recreate in a web browser. But in the early Nineties, this surreal first-person, flick-screen adventure title was a revolutionary advancement over anything that had come before. Taking giant leaps in graphics, animation and embedded video, it was a technological milestone all wrapped in a beautifully told adventure story. The game holds a unique place in this list as being the title with possibly the widest overall influence. Until *The Sims*, *Myst* was the best-selling game of all time and its reach and impact extend way beyond the world of gaming – even the creators of *Lost* have said they were inspired by the game.

# Wing Commander

**Released: 1990 | Published by: Origin Systems | Developed by: In-house**

Chris Roberts' space-opera series was more than a 'Put yourself inside the *Star Wars* dogfights' dream come true – it was also one of the major series in Origin's stable that was pushing PC hardware to the limits, and what the FPS boom would do for graphics cards, *Wing Commander* and its sequels did for pushing any self-respecting gamer's take on minimum PC specs through the roof. In fact, they arguably spearheaded the very concept of "a gaming PC". More memory (so we could struggle with config.sys and autoexec.bat!), VGA graphics, a SoundBlaster card and mouse/joystick as standard – think about the fact that these were not PC gaming staples before *Wing Commander*.





# The Sims

**Released: 2000 | Published by: Electronic Arts**
**Developed by: Maxis**

It stands as testament to his impact on PC gaming that Will Wright is the only designer to have two titles appearing in this list, and both of them are simulations based on premises that less visionary mortals might not even imagine could be fun. A life simulator? *Really?* But there you have it – the game sees you take some virtual humans, chuck them in a household and manage their lives. Bland on paper, phenomenal in execution, *The Sims* has been synonymous with PC gaming for more than ten years, through sequels and countless expansions and add-ons. Instantly accessible to both serious and casual gamers, *The Sims* has outsold anything else on the system and remains popular today.





# Alone In The Dark

**Released: 2000 | Published by: Electronic Arts | Developed by: Maxis**

French designer Frédérick Raynal's masterpiece, *Alone In The Dark*'s success came from its brilliant fusing of traditional adventure game elements and real-time action sequences. All brought together into a dark Lovecraftian narrative, the game sported a novel interface with true 3D characters laid over pre-rendered backgrounds. This was genuine survival horror before the term was even coined, and it's safe to say the *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill* franchises' blood runs thick with *Alone In The Dark* genes. *Alone In The Dark* may look quaint by today's standards, but it still manages to turn the screws on the player in a way that few other games can manage. It also spawned two rubbish films.








**“ This was genuine survival horror before the term was even coined ”**

# Star Control II

**Released: 1992 | Published by: Accolade | Developed by: Toys For Bob**

*Star Control II* may be one of the most expansive sequels not only on the PC but in all of gaming history. Whereas the first title was a more straightforward space combat game with a dash of resource management, *Star Control II* borrowed from the similarly excellent *Starflight 2* and added in a huge adventure with a massive galaxy of star systems to explore, unique and memorable alien races to encounter (and befriend or destroy), great dialogue, more ships to battle, and the ability to traverse the surfaces of the planets themselves. All of this was aided by greatly improved resource management, unforgettable music that showcased the MOD scene at the time, and a simple melee option to battle with friends. It's an outstanding title that is now available to download for free as *The Ur-Quan Masters*, and its combination of being able to bring together such a sprawling game world while maintaining simplicity and approachability has yet to be surpassed. Bioware may get all the credit nowadays for creating a believable universe, but Toys For Bob did it first.





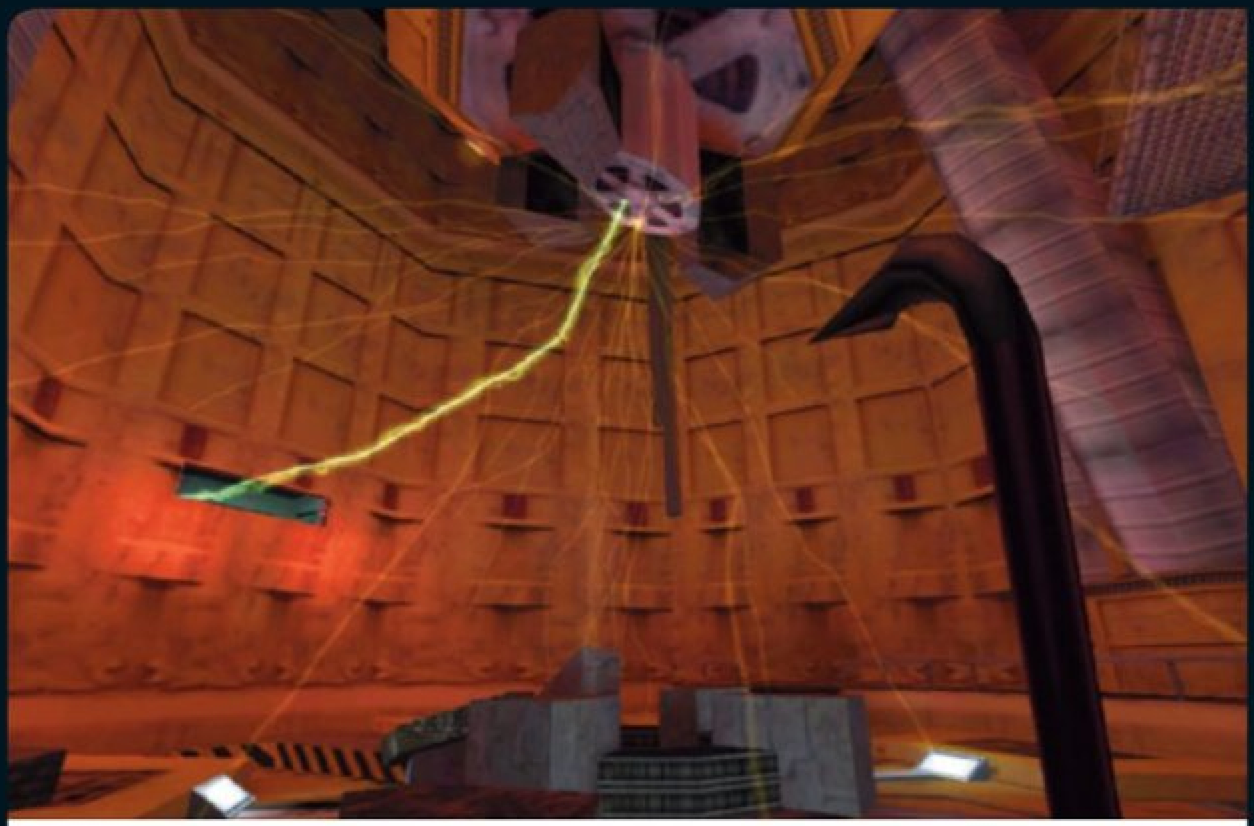




# Counter-Strike

**Released: 2000 | Published by: Valve Corporation**
**Developed by: Minh Le, Jess Cliffe and Valve Corporation**

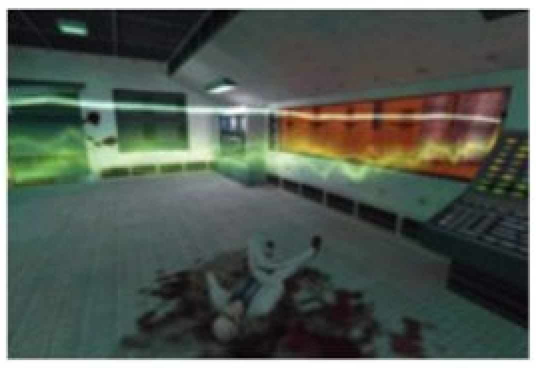
The fact that a counter-terrorism-themed *Half-Life* mod could be not only massively popular throughout multiple generations but also spawn an online phenomenon *and* make the list of most defining PC games of all time stands testament to the benefits of the system's inherently open nature. Indeed, it's part of what sets PC gaming apart from its console cousins: opening up a game to the fans to take a great engine and improve on it as they see fit is an aspect of gaming arguably defining of the PC itself, and there are no better examples of this in action than *Counter-Strike* itself.



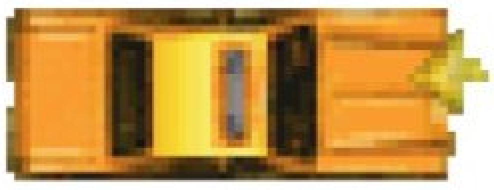
# Half-Life

**Released: 1998 | Published by: Sierra Entertainment**
**Developed by: Valve Corporation**

*Half-Life* was so much more than just another high-profile FPS released when the genre was really coming into its own. While many were focusing on the weapons, enemies, and advancements in level design, *Half-Life* did all that and took it much further by exploring groundbreaking new ways of storytelling within a game. Taking on the role of silent protagonist Gordon Freeman with the premise of good old scientific research gone wrong, players were presented with a smooth flow between combat, puzzle sequences and narrative exposition that was entirely new to the genre. Imaginative, now-iconic enemies were brought into the fray, the crowbar usurped the chainsaw as the weapon of choice, vent crawling and crate smashing became genre staples and community modding was taken to new levels – all thanks to *Half-Life.*











# Grand Theft Auto

**Released: 1997**
**Published by: ASC Games/Rockstar Games**
**Developed by: DMA Design**

Let loose to wreak havoc in a city without real consequences, players went around stealing cars, murdering innocents, robbing banks – or whatever they felt like thanks to the freeform nature of the game. *GTA* had everything the young gaming public wanted and also showed that the PC could produce massive hits that competed with consoles both in terms of graphics and fast-paced gameplay. While its more recent iterations have veered away from the top-down approach of the originals and are now more often associated with consoles, the *GTA* series has its feet firmly planted in PC gaming and are an important landmark in the system's history.

# Microsoft Flight Simulator

**Released: 1982 | Published by: Microsoft**
**Developed by: subLOGIC**

Teetering precariously between game and pure simulator, this title had an incredible influence on PC gaming, and the world of videogames as a whole. Sandbox, realistic weather, true 3D, physics, expansion packs: let's not forget that many of the terms we now consider as standard – hell, terms we *expect* from new games – all had their roots in a hardcore, no-frills simulator with only the simplest of monochrome wireframe graphics. What the series, and indeed the genre, has gone on to today is all thanks to subLOGIC and Microsoft's work more than 30 years ago.




Courtesy of Jos Grupping of fshistory.simflight.com

# Colossal Cave Adventure

**Released: 1976 | Published by: n/a**
**Developed by: William Crowther and Don Woods**

The world of interactive fiction began right here, in 1976, with a simple program existing as a nondescript file developed by a caving enthusiast, and later improved by a keen programmer at Stanford's Artifical Intelligence lab. While the genre may have been an inevitability given the very nature of early computers and their text parser-based user interfaces, the likes of *Zork*, *Planetfall* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* all owe more than a little something to Crowther and Woods' creation.

The legacy of this significant title extends far beyond interactive fiction: its impact on gaming spans a host of systems, hardware generations and game genres. *Colossal Cave Adventure* was one of the most important titles in gaming history.



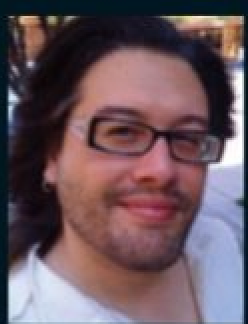


# World Of Warcraft

**Released: 2004 | Published by: Blizzard Entertainment | Developed by: In-house**

There was nothing of this scale before, and there have been no pretenders to the throne since. Set in the *Warcraft* series' world of Azeroth, *WOW* lets players take on the role one of thirteen playable races in a beautifully detailed, epic-scale fantasy universe. Sporting a distinctive art style and years of playable content, this massive game is a lot of things to a lot of people, running the full gamut from casual fantasy escapist fun to home-wrecking all-consuming obsession. No matter how you see it, there's no denying that *WOW* forever changed the online gaming landscape.

## John Romero



**While you were working on *Doom* was there any point at which you felt that what you were developing would go on to be regarded by many as the most defining PC games of all time?**
We knew we were making the greatest game we had ever played or heard of, which is why we put out a press release as soon as we started working on it in January 1993. We didn't think about the long-term ramifications or impact of the game, just that it was going to be the best thing ever.

**What do you think was *Doom*'s major progression over *Wolfenstein 3D*?**
There were so many of them. First, the engine changed from a 2D tile matrix (blocky walls) to a beautiful line segment/sector architecture that allowed walls anywhere, at varying heights, with texture alignment control, lighting level and effects, switches anywhere, etc. It was a massive improvement from *Wolf 3D*'s engine. Then there was multiplayer, which really defined the future of fast-action multiplayer gaming with deathmatch. Finally, the ability to mod the game allowed everyone to make levels, sounds, etc, and go wild with the game, crafting their own vision of fun. It all happened the first time in this game.

For retail distribution of the shareware version, we did something never replicated since: we told all companies that could put a disk or CD on a store shelf to take the shareware version and charge $9.99 or less – and keep the profit. We didn't want profit from the shareware version, we wanted distribution! So back then you would go into a place like CompUSA and see about 10 different boxes of *Doom*, all with the same shareware inside. That doesn't happen anymore. But we got crazy distribution from it.

**Was there an AH-HA! moment where you realised you'd done something truly new and innovating?**
That happened several times while making the game. The first time was when John Carmack got the engine running with lighting levels and varying floor heights – it looked amazing. Then when I created an experimental level using a new design style and everyone was impressed and excited. John getting BSPs working, then multiplayer were huge milestones. The game was impressive the entire time we were developing it, so we eventually got used to it! When we released the game we were tired of playing it – for only about a week.

**The genre you helped create now dominates the gaming landscape. It must feel pretty good to know you and the team at id have had such a major impact on gamers the world over?**
Yes, it's pretty crazy to think about it. It was so lucky to be around when lightning struck so many times in a row. Our small team of four (nine eventually) was unique and talented enough to do it.

**Is there anything specific that you learned while you were developing *Doom* that you still apply to the games you make today?**
Keep it simple. That's really the key. We cut a lot out of the initial design of *Doom* while making it. Then I got rid of LIVES and SCORE, and that really kept the focus on just getting out alive.

**If there is anything else you would like to add about the development of the game or the impact it has had on PC gaming, please feel free to mention it here.**
I was really happy to see the first-person shooter genre start to mature and split into several sub-genres, such as tactical shooters (*Rainbow Six, Ghost Recon*), and then watch competitive eSports spring from LAN-gaming, then see multiplayer really take over most games.

The regret that I have right now is that level design has changed focus from major exploration and puzzle solving to an art show on a track with cinematic pauses. Additionally, today's FPS games have slowed down the player's movement speed. Playing *Doom* on a LAN is pure adrenaline speed and twitch action; today's FPS's not so much. And with the slow movement came the rise of the cover system and bullet-sponge gameplay which I dislike. I'm all about speed and skill and intense weapons, not crawling around and ducking and pot-shotting. As far as my non-*Doom* favorite FPS, *Half-Life 2* was the last great FPS.

In looking back at the development of *Doom*, it wasn't a cake-walk, but it didn't feel like anything was impossible. We felt invulnerable, and we were adept. It was time for that game to appear – *Doom* was waiting to be made. If we at id didn't do it, *Doom* would come from someone else, sometime. We were in tune with the universe at the right time to conjure magic.




# Doom

**Released: 1993 | Published by: id Software / GT Interactive**
**Developed by: id Software**

This is it – this is the big one that forever changed PC gaming and ignited an entire industry. Simply put, neither the FPS genre nor the graphics card technology would be where they are today without this game and the impact it had. Almost devoid of storyline, *Doom* was all about pure action, and this it delivered in bucketloads: menacing enemies both humanoid and supernatural, chunky weapons that really felt like they packed a punch, and satisfyingly gory visuals, they were all here. Aided by a clear objective (kill enemies, find the coloured keycards, and make it to the exit alive), a navigable automap and a no-frills HUD, the game also included secret areas and level summaries to scratch the completionist's itch. It also set the foundations for modding and user generated content with its very flexible WAD files, allowing for custom graphics and sounds to all be imported into fan-made maps.

And sure, it's technically only 2.5D, but there's no denying *Doom* was *the* PC game of the early Nineties, and its success and popularity allowed the brilliant minds behind it to later bring us true 3D first-person shooters, springboarding graphics card technology and seeing 3D graphics performance as the benchmark of measuring a PC's power. Choosing to feature *Doom* over older brother *Wolfenstein 3D* was not a snap decision, but we agreed that *Wolf* is considered more *Doom*-lite than *Doom* is considered *Wolfenstein 2.0*. Truly groundbreaking and with an impact unrivalled by any other title, *Doom* is arguably the most significant title in PC gaming.



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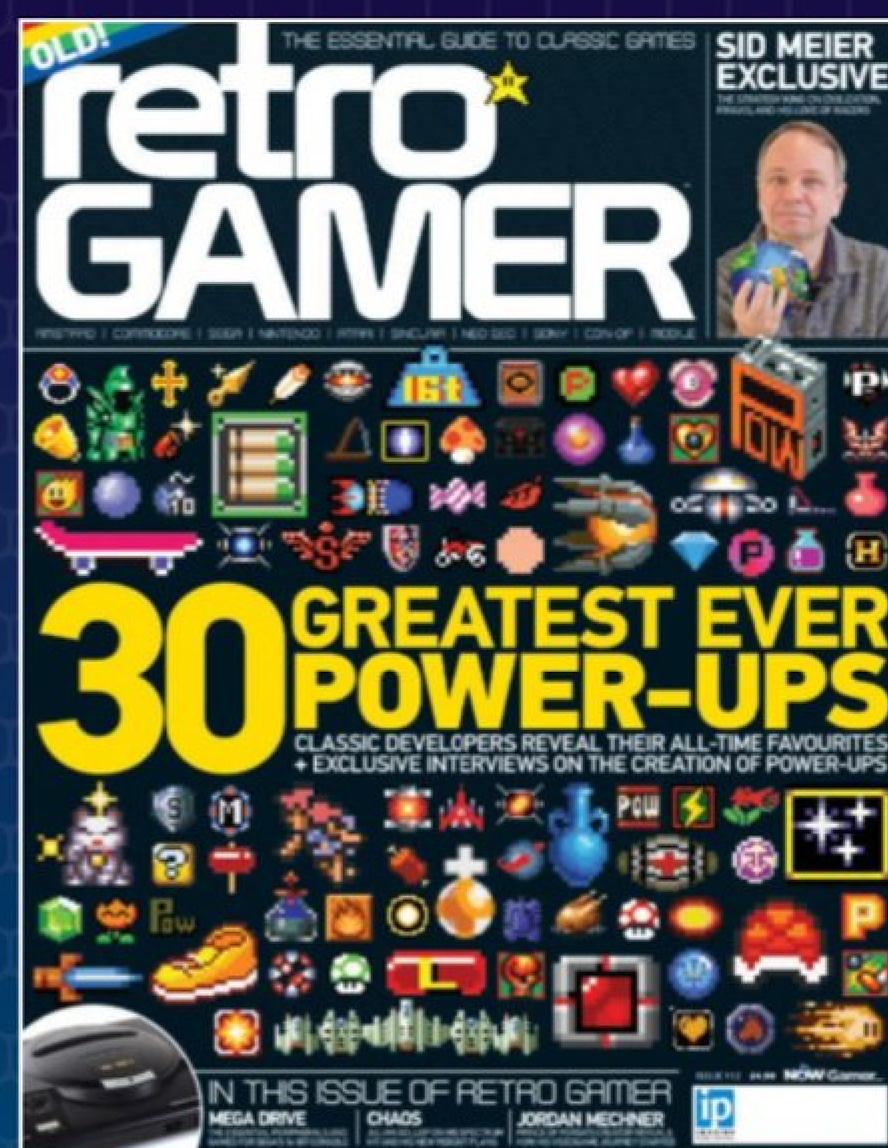
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# THE MAKING OF



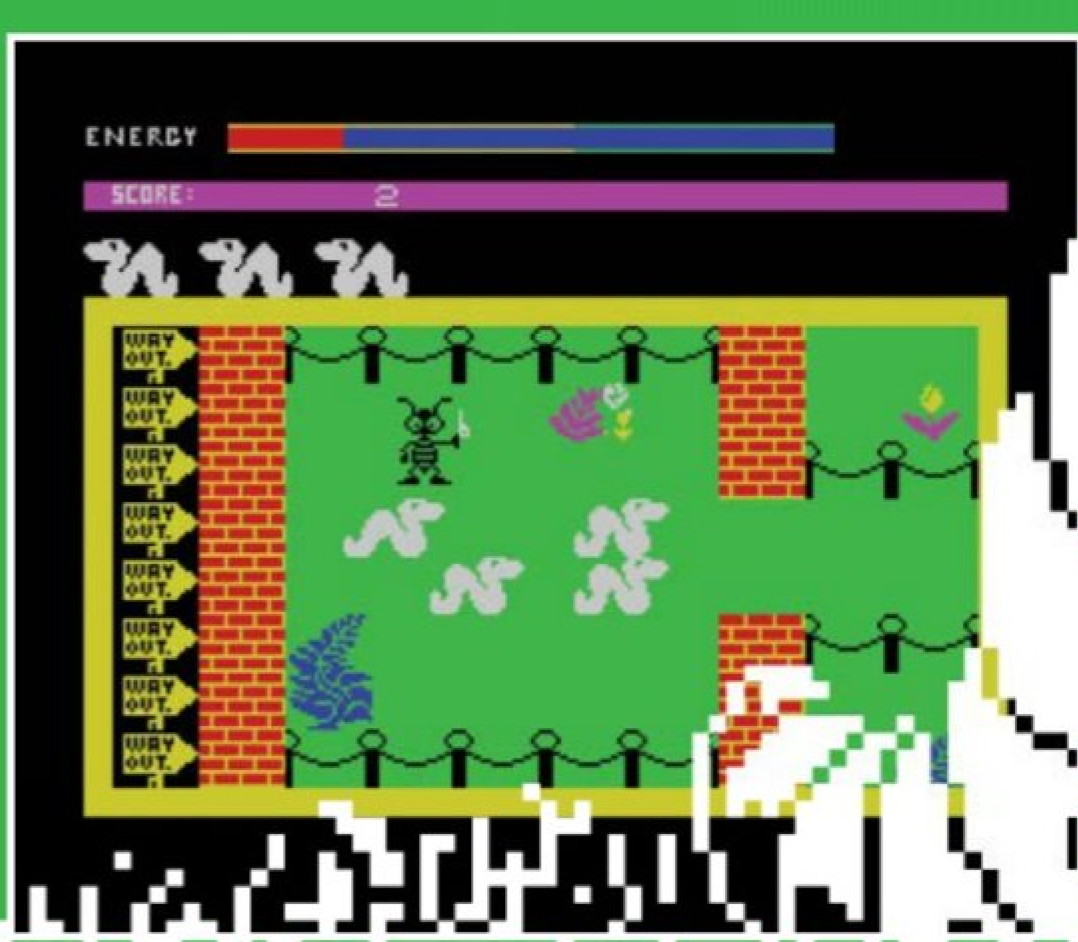
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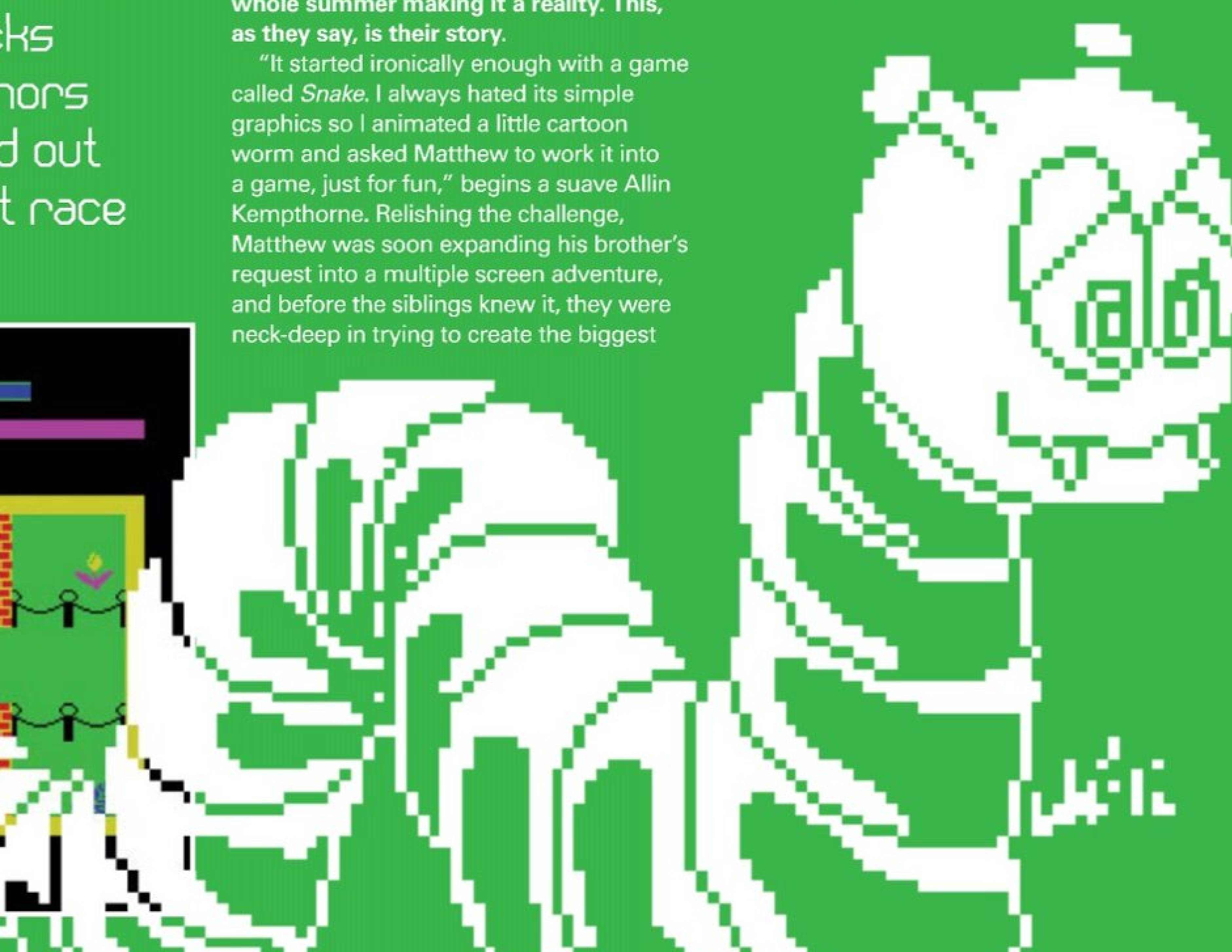
**Renowned Eighties hardware specialists Romantic Robot only ever released one game on the Spectrum and it was a cracker. An early Crash Smash, Wriggler went on become a cult favourite and Graeme Mason tracks down its mysterious authors Devonshire House to find out more on the best maggot race simulator around. . .**





**This isn't just the background on the creation of one of the most fondly-loved ZX Spectrum games; it's also about two teenage twin brothers, stuck in a remote Cornish village with only their dreams and aspirations offering an escape route. One day, in the Spring of 1984, young Matthew and Allin Kempthorne-Ley-Edwards got the idea for a computer game into their heads and then spent a whole summer making it a reality. This, as they say, is their story.**

"It started ironically enough with a game called *Snake*. I always hated its simple graphics so I animated a little cartoon worm and asked Matthew to work it into a game, just for fun," begins a suave Allin Kempthorne. Relishing the challenge, Matthew was soon expanding his brother's request into a multiple screen adventure, and before the siblings knew it, they were neck-deep in trying to create the biggest Spectrum game ever. Matthew was to be the programmer and driving force of the game; his interest in computers had been sparked in the late Seventies when his father took him to a radio ham club where someone was demonstrating an early home computer, the Nascom 2. "When a friend of mine bought a ZX80 I learned how to program in basic, and a year later I'd saved up enough for a ZX81. When it came to the Spectrum I realised that if I





» [Spectrum] The colourful garden was the first area to be negotiated.

took my computer into school, the other kids would pay me to play on it, hence the idea that creating games could be a useful hobby and ultimately business," confesses the budding entrepreneur.

Soon Matthew had worked out a maze generation algorithm and was putting Allin's creation to work. "We mixed around a few thoughts and came up with the idea of a maggot race," he explains, "and decided to situate the game within several different scenarios." These would form four distinct graphical areas: the garden, scrublands, underground and mansion. Designing the look of the levels was where Allin came in. "I was the arty one always carrying my sketchbook, with dreams of becoming a newspaper cartoonist," he remembers, "so it was my role to create all the graphics and animations." In addition to the initial idea, there were two key influences to *Wriggler*. "At the time, Ultimate was considered the best game developer and we were sure that our graphics should be in a similar – if not superior – class," says Matthew. The other influence is perhaps a little more surprising as Allin explains: "I think I was more inspired by text adventures, in particular *The Hobbit*. It opened my mind to the fact you could have really large maps to a game."

So with the idea in place, the brothers set about developing their ambitious game. "I drew each screen on a page of a school maths book that may have been, er, appropriated," admits Allin quietly, "and slowly built it up by sticking it to our bedroom wall. It got so big that it

## BUYING WRIGGLER



**"I had travelled to Cornwall to see a utility that we were offered by someone who insisted on seeing me personally," remembers Alexander Goldscheider, the man behind famous Eighties hardware specialists Romantic Robot, "and unfortunately it wasn't really for us. On seeing our disappointment he told me his sister was in love with a young programmer who was developing a game with his twin brother." Keen not to have a wasted journey, Alexander soon met up with the Kempthorne-Ley-Edwards twins and fell in love with *Wriggler* before making an agreement on the spot that he would publish the game once completed. We hope to bring more on the Romantic Robot story soon.**

> We mixed around a few thoughts and came up with the idea of a maggot race
>
> MATTHEW KEMPTHORNE-LEY-EDWARDS

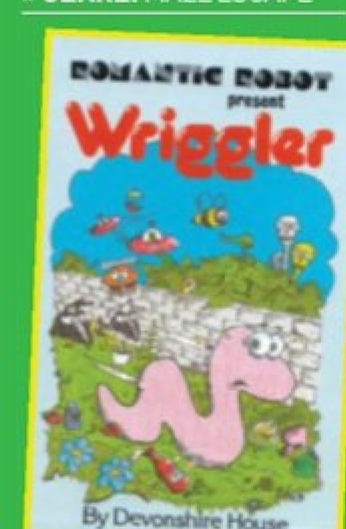
eventually overlapped onto the ceiling and adjacent walls; we'd often wake up in the middle of the night covered in sheets of paper!" he laughs. With a trade name in place (after the building where their father lived), the 15-year old school boys began working overtime on Wriggler. "It took a whole school summer holiday and then some," continues Allin, "and it was pretty intensive too. But this was the age before the internet, there were only three TV channels and we lived in a tiny Cornish town that smelled of fish and horse manure – so there weren't a great deal of distractions!"

With Allin delighting in his role of creating the colourful garden scenario and the underground and mansion sections coming together as inspired by *Scramble* and *Jet Set Willy* respectively, Matthew soon realised that memory (or rather a lack of) was going to act as a considerable weight on their ambitions. "Because the game was so big, I had to use a few tricks; for instance, quite often a screen would only be half used and then shared with another screen," he divulges. It became clear that the game design would have to be scaled back – by over 25 per cent – and the Spectrum's capacity was run so close that a familiar bug appeared towards the end of the game as Matthew reveals: "We had a stack overflow caused by the lack of memory, in which the CPU started overwriting the end of the last image block." However, with the bug affecting the lift in the mansion section, appearing



## IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** DEVONSHIRE HOUSE
- » **DEVELOPER:** ROMANTIC ROBOT
- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **PLATFORM:** ZX SPECRUM
- » **GENRE:** MAZE ESCAPE



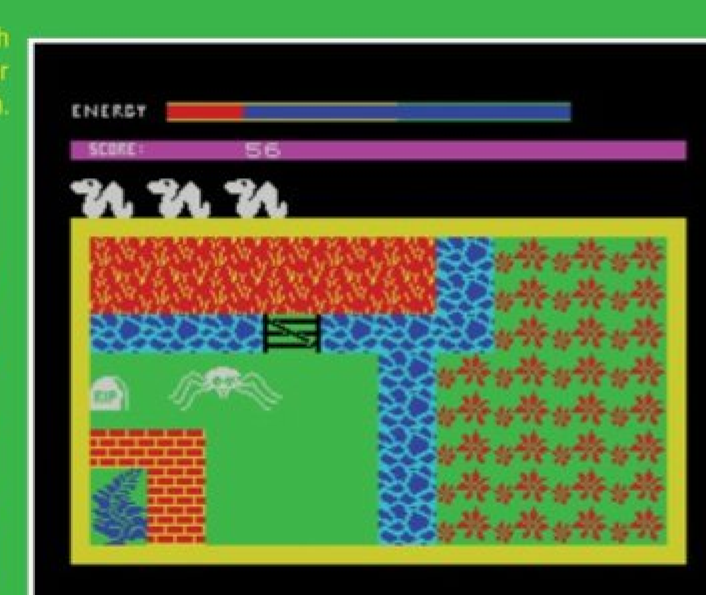

to give the effect of a smoking trail, the brothers left it. "I think we were about 8-12 bytes short in the end," winces Matthew.

Given **Retro Gamer**'s inherent fear of spiders, we've skirted around this question so far, but can avoid it no longer. Just how did the lads create that wonderfully evil-looking arachnid? "That was my idea initially, as having seen some of Allin's superb creations, I dared him to create a really creepy spider – a challenge I knew he couldn't refuse!" grins Matthew. Allin decided research was the order of the day and set about bringing increasingly enormous spiders into their house, something that their mother wasn't too pleased about. "Mum got pretty freaked, but we were both adamant that the spider had to be *really* creepy, as if it were actually crawling across the screen – which was a tough challenge considering the graphics available on a Spectrum. We were very pleased with the end result, although it took me bloody ages!" In addition to the spider, the garden section saw wasps, ants and spigglies all threaten the player's brave little maggot. Spigglies? "It was a little insect with rotor wings that moved in a vertical pattern," says Allin, "and the first creature I created. I think I based him on a detail I'd seen in a comic somewhere." Answers on a postcard for that one, please… Meanwhile, with the enemies ▶



» [Spectrum] Collecting the different keys to finally escape was an arduous task.

» [Spectrum] One touch from the evil spider meant instant death.



# THE MAKING OF

▶ done, Allin focused on other graphical aspects, such as a comical tombstone that rose up whenever the player lost a maggot. "That was another idea that popped into my head at school when I probably should have been concentrating on whatever wisdom the teacher was trying to impart…" remembers Allin, revealing how much the game had taken over their lives.

By the end of September, *Wriggler* was complete, and the Kempthorne-Ley-Edwards' already had an interested publisher. "Our big sister's boyfriend told me a company he was talking to were interested in our game," explains Matthew. "And being London-based, with us being in the tip of Cornwall, it meant a lot of time spent on trains." Allin remembers being delighted with the offer from Romantic Robot. "I was giddy that we'd actually managed to sell the game although I'm not sure that I even saw the contract. We were only 15 so I think Matthew just handed it to our Dad." With regards to *Wriggler* itself, they had just one regret on the finished version: the ending. "My only sorrow was for those clever souls who actually managed to complete the game as the ending wasn't terribly exciting," laments Allin. "I wanted to do a whole lunar landscape and in fact that's what I'd originally created the spigglies for – but there literally wasn't any memory left for any more graphics." Nevertheless, Matthew recalls feeling extremely pleased with their efforts. "It was a tough game so I doubted many would get that far anyway; and we were happy that the actual gameplay was the best it could be."




» [Spectrum] Picking up items such as this steaming cup of coffee restored energy.

Upon release, *Wriggler* secured many fine reviews and changed the boys' lives forever. "It was a very exciting time," continues Allin. "Developing the game was a fun, if massive, project that two teenage twin brothers did over a school holiday in Cornwall. But when it was released, life suddenly got a lot more interesting." Matthew explains further. "Although the deal with Romantic Robot was royalty-based, we had many fully paid trips to London for the big computer shows with all-you-could-eat KFC every evening. As to the game itself it taught me an awful lot about business, programming efficiency and how to work with others. And having an income at 15/16 years old was a major win!"

"It was all so cottage industry back then too," continues Allin. "I remember putting inlays into cassette boxes on our overnight train up to London, then peddling around a Microfair in a prototype Sinclair C5 throwing out a box-load of promotional *Wriggler* soft toys my mum had handmade! This was the computing equivalent of a rock 'n' roll lifestyle."

After school, Allin moved up to London permanently and began work at Romantic Robot's office, easing the workload on boss Alexander Goldscheider, who was having great success on the back of a new hardware acquisition named Multiface. "I was right at the heart of the scene with the Multiface, which was absolute the coolest thing ever to happen to Spectrum computing," exclaims Allin, "and Alexander was the greatest boss, and a really



## PUBLISHER HIGHLIGHTS

**GENIE** (PICTURED)
**SYSTEM:** SPECTRUM 128
**YEAR:** 1987

**MULTIFACE 1**
**SYSTEM:** SPECTRUM
**YEAR:** 1986

**MULTIFACE 128**
**SYSTEM:** SPECTRUM 128
**YEAR:** 1986

## THE CLASS OF 1985

Wriggler was one of the games included on the first instalment of Beau Jolly's famous *10 Computer Hits* compilations. Here are the other stars…

- **Skool Daze:** Classic early sandbox-style game from Microsphere
- **Chuckie Egg:** Nigel Alderton's iconic egg-collecting platformer
- **Jasper:** Another attractive, if tough, platform game
- **Harrier Attack:** Durell's simple yet addictive horizontal blaster
- **The Sorcerer Of Claymorgue Castle:** The obligatory adventure and a cracker from Adventure International
- **Braxx Bluff:** Micromega's graphically appealing yet rock-hard sci-fi game
- **Overlords:** A playable two-player strategy title
- **Project Future:** Massive space maze game from Micromania
- **Brian Jacks Superstar Challenge:** The one real clunker, a poor joystick-waggler







» [Spectrum] The scrublands lay just outside the garden.

funny and warm-hearted guy." Even more importantly for the budding artist, his work on Romantic Robot's advertisements had given him an entry into his dream profession and he began freelancing as a cartoonist for several newspapers. "I was now 17 and had come a long way in two years. *Wriggler* completely changed my life."

With the Spectrum version of *Wriggler* in the bag, Matthew worked hard converting the game to the Amstrad and, later, the doomed Enterprise. "It was a port of the Amstrad version," he reveals, "and shared eighty per cent of the same code. They were launching this new computer and wanted a pile of games to go with it." In partnership with a fellow school pupil, Matthew went on to produce another Amstrad game for Romantic Robot (*Never Mind The Nasties*) before receiving an Amstrad Action Accolade for his ROM-based filing system, RODOS. Yet, despite some Unix *Boulderdash* and *Pac-Man* clones at University "which merged high scores from different universities into one common chart" beams Matthew, videogames were soon left behind by both Matthew and Allin as they pursued their respective – and diverse – careers.

After becoming restless with life as a cartoonist, Allin enlisted in drama school and became an actor, writer and TV presenter. "At the moment I'd say I'm best known for writing and starring in the comedy film *The Vampires Of Bloody Island*," says Allin, gleaming with pride. "Almost thirty years ago we had a small cult following with *Wriggler* – and now I've got another cult following with vampire fans around the world – it's funny how life goes round in circles."

Indeed it is, and the twins' story is an incredible tale from an age when computers and computer games had started to become big business, yet two young schoolboys could create a best-selling videogame from their bedrooms during one summer holiday. Those, as they say, were the days.

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



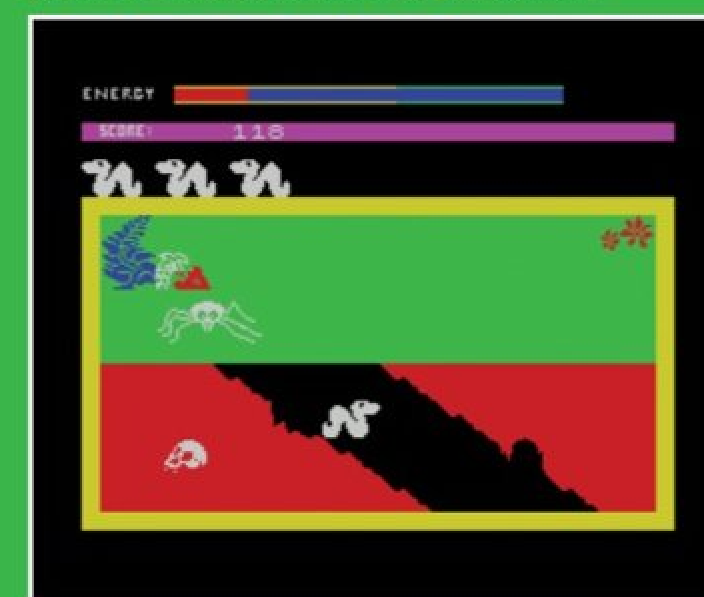
■ **Matthew Kempthorne-Ley-Edwards:** After spells in the Telecom and Marketing industries, today Matthew works at Communisis Plc, a company that manages communications between the financial industry and the public.



■ **Allin Kempthorne:** Allin enlisted in drama school and became an actor, writer and presenter. He is presently working on a four-part documentary called *The First Stars Of Vaudeville* and you can find out more on this and his other projects (such as *The Vampires Of Bloody Island*) at www.wibbell.co.uk

■ **Alexander Goldscheider:** After Romantic Robot ceased manufacturing in the early Nineties, Alexander eventually returned to his real love, music, and runs a small record label with the same name today: www.romantic-robot.com

■ **The Maggot:** After finishing fourth in the race, the cutest maggot in the world became something of a celebrity until one day he was caught on a hook and became a Koi carp's breakfast, thus encapsulating the fleeting nature of fame.




» [Spectrum] The entrance to the underground tunnels.

> "Wriggler completely changed my life"
> ALLIN KEMPTHORNE

## GREAT AND SMALL



### BUGABOO THE FLEA (1983)

■ Originally released in Spain, *Bugaboo The Flea* saw the player attempting to guide the titular insect up and out of a cavern. The game famously used an odd control method with only two controls – left and right.




### SIM ANT (1991)

■ Keen to expand on the *Sim City* brand, Will Wright created this ant colony simulation back in 1991. The ultimate goal was to defeat the red ants and even drive those pesky humans from their own home. Go Black Ants!



### EARTHWORM JIM (1994)

■ Shiny Entertainment's wonderfully comic adventure graced the Mega Drive and SNES back in the mid-Nineties. Essentially a run-and-gun style game, the USP of controlling a worm gave Shiny licence to introduce some crazy ideas.



### WORMS (1995)

■ Team17 struck gold back in 1995 with this annelid-laden turn-based strategy game. Like *Earthworm Jim*, the worms were utilised for good comic effect, which, in addition to some novel weaponry, created a bestseller.

WAY OUT.

# THE EVOL
# PLATFO

**WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE PLATFORMER, EH? 20 YEARS AGO IT DOMINATED SALES CHARTS AND GAMERS' HEARTS, BUT THESE DAYS IT SEEMS TO HAVE LOST ITS POWER INSIDE MAINSTREAM GAMING. RETRO GAMER LOOKS AT THE RISE AND FALL OF THIS ONCE GREAT GIANT…**

**The platformer was once the king of videogames, but in recent years it seems to have been discarded like an outgrown toy in favour of gritty realistic shooters.** Ask for our tuppence worth and we'll tell you that likely one of the reasons why platformers became so popular in the Nineties is because they showed 8 and 16-bit games tech in the most fun and flattering light, and at the peak of their popularity some of the best talents in the industry were making them. Platformers were also pretty ubiquitous beasts too, with other popular games and genres containing platformery elements if you looked hard enough – from shooters (*Mega Man*, *Contra*) to racers (*Unirally*).

From a development perspective, platformers also had benefits. In their prime they didn't rely on fancy 3D graphics or worlds, and didn't require tens of buttons and dual analog sticks to control; a trusty D-pad or joystick to move a hero in two opposite directions, and a single button to make them jump, was as complex as their controls needed to be, which made the vast majority of them simple to pick up and universally accessible.

In terms of the genre's decline in popularity, we suspect age probably has a part to play. Gamers who enjoyed playing



# UTION OF
# ORMERS

platformers in the Nineties may feel that the genre is less relevant to them now. Like toys and cartoons, some may feel they've outgrown them and look to more mature looking gaming experiences for entertainment.

But it's important to stress, of course, that the platformer is still very much alive. *Super Mario Galaxy* was one of the highest scoring games of this generation, while *LittleBigPlanet* has become a popular franchise for Sony, generating merchandise and even its own *Mario Kart*-style racing game. And you need only look to indie game development for innovative 2D platformers. Titles such as *Braid*, *Super Meat Boy* and *Spelunky* prove that they are very much alive and jumping, and do well to remind us that still, regardless of videogame technology advances, probably no genre looks and 'feels' most like a classic videogame than the platformer. We take a look at the platformer over different generations, charting its rise and fall and speaking to developers who have helped to shape the genre.



## KNOW YOUR PLATFORMER

**THE GENRE IS PRETTY UBIQUITOUS, SO WE ATTEMPT TO CATEGORISE ITS MANY DIFFERENT FLAVOURS…**

### SINGLE-SCREEN



**Typified by:** *Donkey Kong, Mario Bros., Bubble Bobble*
**Characteristics:** The earliest type of platformer, they often require you to clear the screen of enemies or get to a specific part of the level. Most also feature co-op gameplay.

### ADVENTURE



**Typified by:** *Pitfall!, Metroid, Castlevania*
**Characteristics:** Will often feature explorative gameplay, requiring the player to locate something or level up their character to progress.

### CINEMATIC



**Typified by:** *Prince Of Persia, Flashback, Oddworld*
**Characteristics:** Will often feature detailed looking worlds, rotoscope heroes and deeper narratives than other styles of platformer. They aren't as popular nowadays.

### 3D



**Typified by:** *Super Mario 64, Banjo-Kazooie, Conker's Bad Fur Day*
**Characteristics:** Fully 3D world, often featuring a collection element and strong narrative that makes them most feel like a descendant of the adventure-platformer.

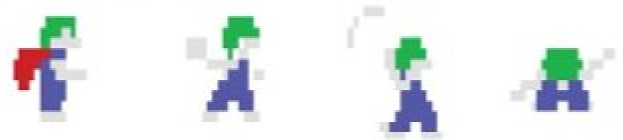
### SHOOTER



**Typified by:** *Jump Bug, Ghouls'n Ghosts, Bionic Commando*
**Characteristics:** This was the first example of scrolling platformer, and has gradually evolved over the years into the popular run-and-gun genre.

### PUZZLE

**Typified by:** *Lemmings, The Lost Vikings*
**Characteristics:** Has the look of a platformer but its core gameplay is often found resource management and logic-based gameplay.



### 2.5D



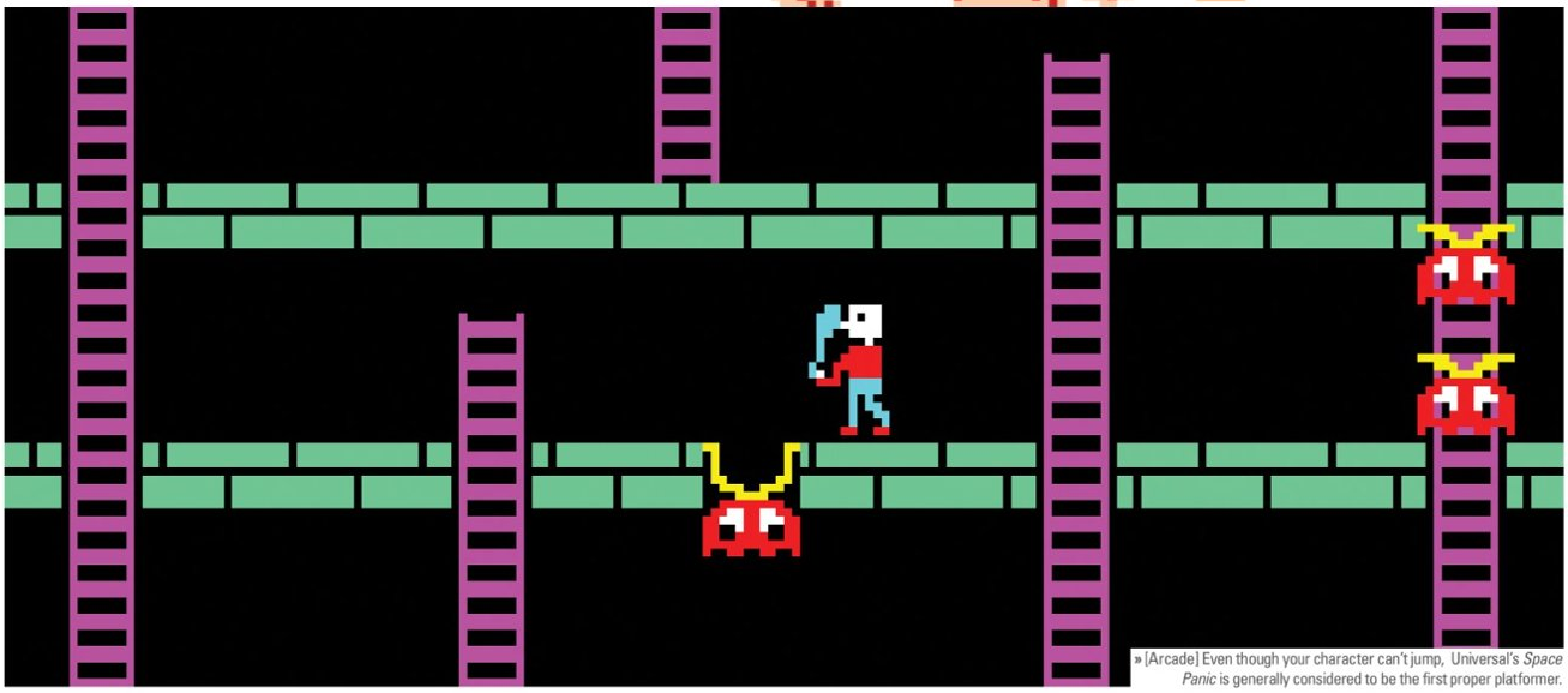
**Typified by:** *Clockwork Knight, Tombal, Klonoa*
**Characteristics:** The gameplay essence of a side-scrolling 2D platformer that is presented as a 3D world viewed side-on. Often seen on handhelds.

### ENDLESS RUNNERS



**Typified by:** *Jetpack Joyride, Canabalt, Temple Run*
**Characteristics:** Similar to the forced scrolling levels found in certain platfromers, but here you continue forever until you hit an obstacle. Ideally suited for mobile devices.

# 8-BIT GENERATION BIRTH OF A GENRE



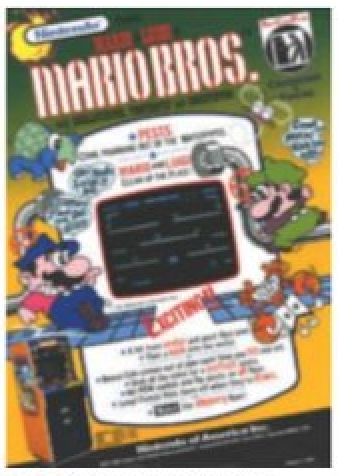
» [Arcade] Even though your character can't jump, Universal's *Space Panic* is generally considered to be the first proper platformer.

**So what was the first ever platformer? Well, the answer to that question is open to debate, as it depends on your definition of what a platformer actually is.** And there are many variations of the form. Many cite Universal's 1980 coin-op *Space Panic* as the first. It certainly looked like one, with inviting cartoony graphics and single-screen stages adorned with colourful platforms connected by ladders and bug-eyed tomato looking alien enemies.

However, the point of dispute stems from the fact your player-character can't actually jump. Now a defining characteristic of the genre, with the absence of a jump button you got around in *Space Panic* by using ladders and digging traps for your enemies to fall into. Proving that even the most seminal games often owe a debt to something, *Space Panic*'s trap-'em-up gameplay is believed to have been inspired by *Heiankyo Alien,* an earlier Japanese top-down maze computer game that sees a policeman defending Earth from space invaders.

> **"When you ran Harry onto a new jungle screen, it was you who felt the risk"** DAVID CRANE, PITFALL! CREATOR

But if jumping is the defining characteristic then Nintendo's smash hit *Donkey Kong*, released in 1981, was probably the first platformer to contain all the core elements. Though its 'building climbing' theme shares a lot of similarities with Nichibutsu's earlier 1980 jumping-less platformer *Crazy Climber*, *Donkey Kong* saw players trying to get a little carpenter hero (who later became Mario) from a point A to a point B to complete a stage. It also featured a power-up (the hammer), individually themed levels, ended on a sort-of boss battle, and, most crucially, featured that all important jump mechanic. Becoming incredibly successful, like the big, brash stealing ape he is portrayed as in the game, *Donkey Kong* took much of *Space Panic*'s thunder, which is why many regard this as the first ever platform game.



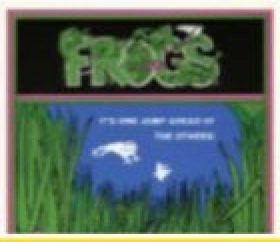
» *Mario Bros* was the first official outing for Mario after his name change.

Though obscure 1981 coin-op *Jump Bug*, released a few months after *DK*, is deemed by many as the first ever side-scrolling platformer (with smooth scrolling no less), certainly the most influential was David Crane's *Pitfall!* in 1982. With interconnected flick-screens that could be explored at the player's own pace, giving the impression

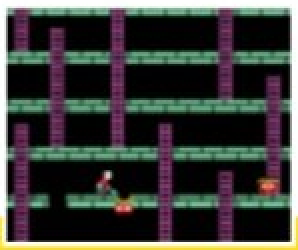
## DID YOU KNOW?

- As well as *Space Panic*, Universal was also behind the *Mr Do* series. Sequel *Mr Do's Castle* features actually very similar gameplay to *Space Panic*.
- *Pitfall!* is the second most successful Atari 2600 game of all time and the best-selling from a third-party developer.
- *Donkey Kong* is the first videogame to use in-game cutscenes to tell a narrative.
- The look of *Pac-Land* was inspired by the *Pac-Man* cartoon.
- *Super Mario Bros. 3* was the best-selling *Mario Bros.* sequel for the NES and sold better than *Super Mario 64*.

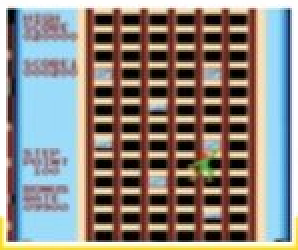
## THE 8-BIT INNOVATIONS



**Frogs**
**1978**
Though it's not a platformer, *Frogs* is the first videogame that features a jumping character.



**Space Panic**
**1980**
Widely considered by many to be the first platformer, it has the look of one but the hero can't jump.



**Crazy Climber**
**1980**
Also falling into the jump-less platformer category, the climbing concept has a parallel with *Donkey Kong*.



**Donkey Kong**
**1981**
*Donkey Kong* shoots the platformer to popularity through cartoon graphics and varied stages.



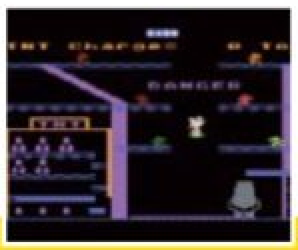
**Jump Bug**
**1981**
The release of *Jump Bug*, a side-scrolling shooter/platformer saw you steering a jumping car.



**Jungle King**
**1982**
Released a few months before *Pitfall!*, *Jungle King* by Taito had scrolling screens and vine-swinging.



**Pitfall**
**1982**
*Pitfall!*'s connected flick-screen stages lay down the archetypal template for the side-scrolling platformer.



**Miner 2049er**
**1982**
The iconic *DK*-style platformer features ten screens and inspire a raft of popular platformers.

of a larger game world, *Pitfall!* spawned the adventure-platformer standard, a torch later carried by the likes of the engaging *Metroid* and *Castlevania*.

Home computers were also getting into the act, with one of the most notable examples being Bill Hogue's excellent *Miner 2049er*, a single-screen platformer with different levels, which would go on to influence Matthew Smith's *Manic Miner* and *Jet Set Willy*.

In 1983 Nintendo released *Mario Bros.* into arcades. Sticking within a single-screen style environment, *Mario Bros.'* design focused around cooperative/competitive gameplay, a concept later improved upon by Taito with its *Bubble Bobble* series. What is also notable about *Mario Bros.* is that it saw Mario and Luigi using parts of the level weapons, nudging the platforms from underneath to flip over enemies and make them safe to kick off the stage – a mechanic reused in *Super Mario Bros*.

Though 1985 sequel *Super Mario Bros.* gets all the plaudits for creating the archetypal template, Namco gets a bit of a bum deal here as its side-scrolling platformer *Pac-Land* predates *Super Mario Bros.* by almost a year, and features colourful parallax scrolling stages and plenty of variety through power-ups, stage design and varied enemies.

Other important platformers releases in the Eighties include Capcom's *Ghosts'n Goblins* (1985), which is most notable for going against conventional platform design by ditching colourful sprites for gothic visuals, and accessibility for one of the hardest first stages in a videogame. Capcom followed this up with another





convention eschewing platformer, *Bionic Commando* in 1987, which famously ditched the jump mechanic for a grappling hook. Jordan Mechner then released *Prince Of Persia* for the Apple II in 1989, which popularised the cinematic platformer subgenre – filled by classics like the earlier (1985) *Impossible Mission*, and followed by the likes of *Another World*, *Flashback* and *Oddworld*. By the end of the Eighties the platformer was starting to gain momentum, although no one could predict the explosion in popularity the next generation would see it enjoy.

## PITFALL! II: THE LOST CAVERNS

■ David's sequel improved on the original in every area. It's was bigger, smoother, featured swimming sections, and visually and aurally was a notable step up from the first game, which is why many regard it as the best game in the revered series.




## DAVID CRANE
### THE CREATOR OF PITFALL!

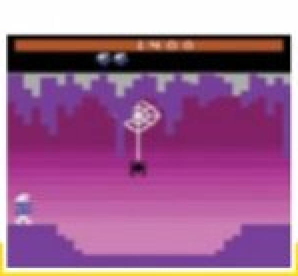


***Pitfall!* was a landmark platformer. When you were writing it did you ever think 'This looks and plays different to everything else'?**
I had that thought nearly every day, but not until after the artistic and technical challenges were met. It has been well documented that *Pitfall!* was one of the first videogames to feature a human-like figure as a main character. But within the context of the evolution of the platform game, the game view is just as important. At the time I developed *Pitfall!*, most games were either single-screen games, or multiple-screen if they were top-down. To make a game that featured a human player I needed to present the game differently, because a person doesn't look much like a person from the top. Once the decision was made to make the game with a side view perspective, it was only logical to do a cutaway view of the world. This made for natural "platforms".

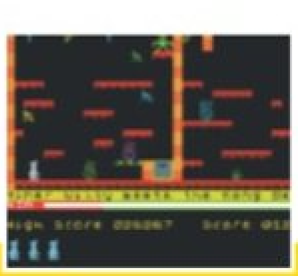
**How important is a strong central hero to a platformer?**
The Holy Grail of videogame design has always been to arouse an emotional response from the player. That was really tough when the main character was a spaceship. But when you play a game with a human avatar you feel an emotional connection. When you ran Harry onto a new jungle screen, it was you who felt the risk. Without that connection, changing screens would just feel like a camera switch.

**What do you feel are the ingredients to a great platformer?**
It is important to know your audience, and to bring them into the experience gently. A game has to be compelling and challenging, but that doesn't mean it has to be extremely difficult – especially to start. In the Eighties, playing a game usually meant learning new skills with the joystick, or at the very least learning how to control *this* game's character. To finish *Pitfall!* one had to learn how to run, jump, and climb – easy. But they also had to figure out that they could jump while running – a skill needed to catch the vine – and (the hardest) how to jump laterally from a standing start. It would have been the epitome of bad game design if the player had to master that last skill right away.

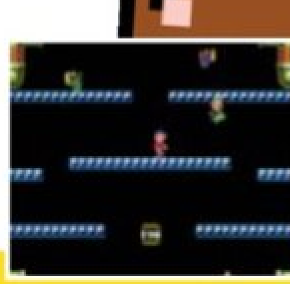
**What are the pros and cons of writing a platform game?**
The world of a platform adventure can be anything the designer can imagine. Ironically this is as much a con as a pro. If you can do anything, or go anywhere, where do you start?



**Smurf: Rescue In Gargamel's Castle 1982**
Released for the ColecoVision, one of the first platformers to be based on a popular cartoon licence.



**Manic Miner 1983**
Arguably the most influential computer platformer to come from a British game programmer.



**Mario Bros 1983**
Popular in large part for its co-operative gameplay, later refined by Taito's and its *Bubble Bobble* series.



**Major Havoc 1983**
This coin-op was notable for being a vector game with platformer-style gameplay sections.



**Pac-Land 1984**
The side-scrolling platformer is ahead of its time, containing popular platformer design elements.



**Super Mario Bros 1985**
With over 40 million copies sold, this side-scrolling platformer is the most successful game in the series.



**Bionic Commando 1987**
One of the earliest games to do away with jumping, this focuses entirely on a swinging arm mechanic.



**Prince Of Persia 1989**
Featuring a deeper narratives and a rotoscope hero, it popularised the cinematic platformer.

# 16-BIT GENERATION ADVERTS AND ANIMALS




» [Mega Drive] *Sonic The Hedgehog* was Sega's answer to *Mario* and a fierce battle between the two has continued ever since.



**From a developer's perspective, platformers provided an easy and effective way to world build, and so the arrival of more powerful consoles and computers equated to larger and better looking places for their imaginations to flourish and gamers to explore.** *Super Mario Bros.* is the game that helped secure the platformer's popularity in the eyes of developers and publishers, and so a platformer boom this generation was inevitable.

By Nintendo making *Super Mario Bros.* a pack-in with NES consoles, platformers were also now seen as a good way to sell games consoles too. Therefore, it's also no surprise that the 16-bit console era is dominated by a legendary console war – a conflict that didn't just occur between corporations and machines, but also between two platform game heroes. In one corner, the portly plumber Mario, in the other a new challenger in the form of a cobalt blue hedgehog named Sonic – two very different heroes in two different styles of platformer.

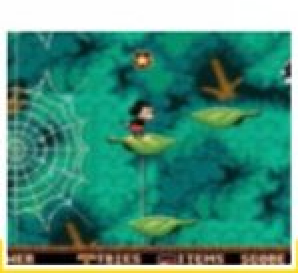
Their rivalry filled the pages of games publications at the time and resulted in a staggering number of platformers appearing, most featuring cartoon anthropomorphic animal heroes and gameplay that aped the look and design of *Super Mario Bros.* and (to a greater extent) *Sonic The Hedgehog*. Some were good (*Rocket Knight Adventures*, and *Jazz Jackrabbit*), some enjoyed success (*Bubsy The Bobcat*) but a large proportion were uninspired (*Socket*) to dreadful (*Awesome Possum*).

Pointing towards more evidence of the popularity of platformers during this time, some developers even began

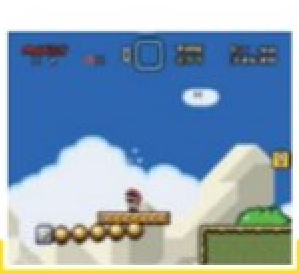



» Sega meant business with *Sonic*, as this popular ad shows.

## 16-BIT INNOVATIONS



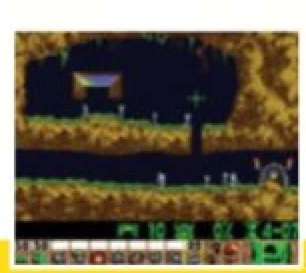
**Castle Of Illusion**
**1990**
The first game in the series proved Sega's intention to pay close attention to the platforming genre.



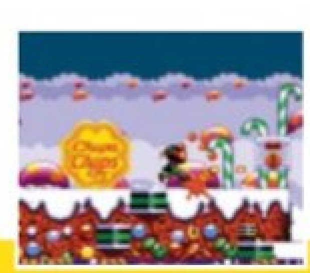
**Super Mario World**
**1990**
With 96 levels, new power-ups and a dinosaur companion, it becomes the best-selling *Mario* sequel.



**Sonic The Hedgehog**
**1991**
*Sonic The Hedgehog* marks a true demonstration of what 16-bit tech means for the genre.



**Lemmings**
**1991**
Capturing the platformer spirit was the excellent genre-straddling puzzle platformer *Lemmings*.



**Zool**
**1992**
*Zool* is one of the earliest examples of a 16-bit 'product placement platformer' featuring Chupa Chups.

## DAVID PERRY
### FOUNDER OF SHINY ENTERTAINMENT



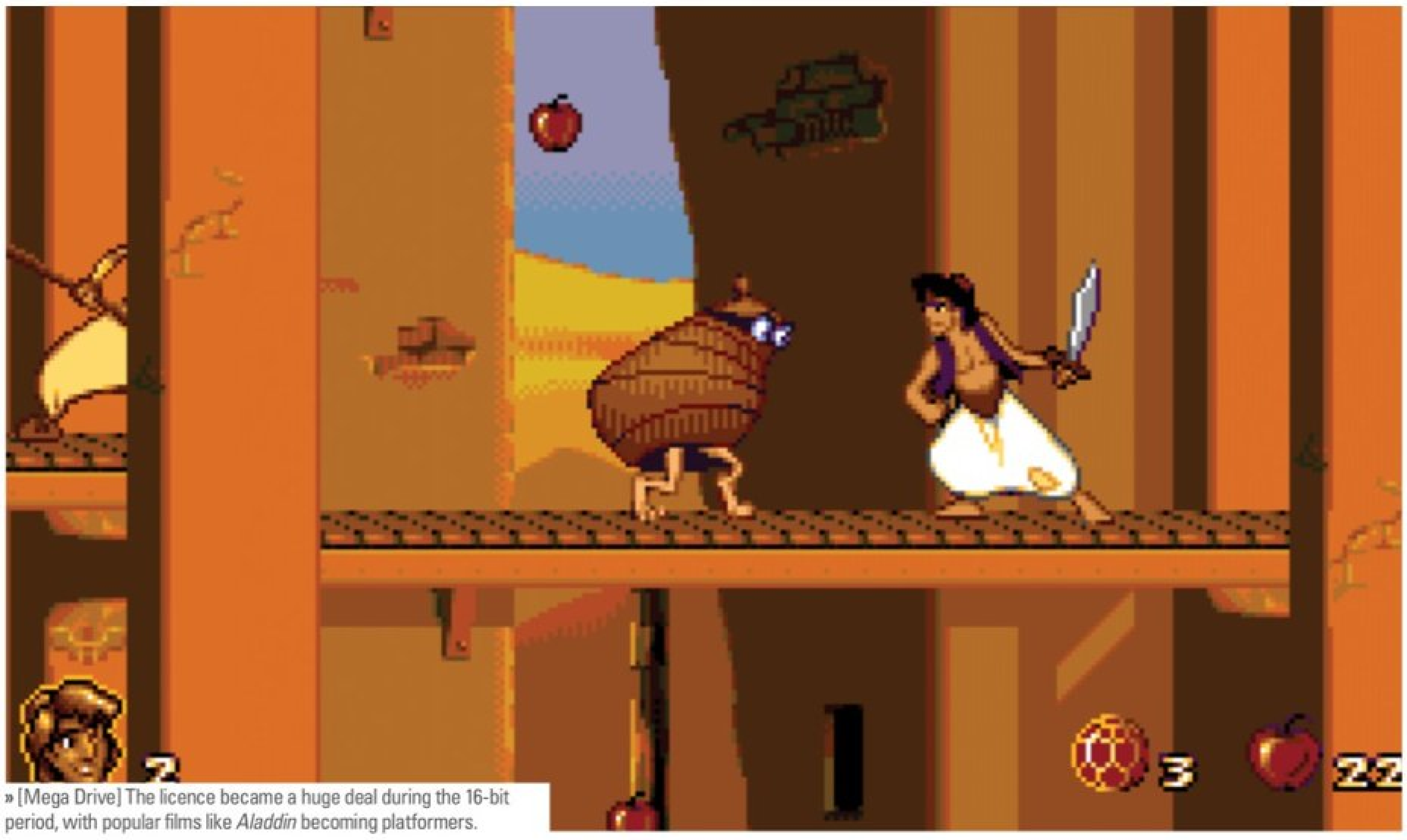
**Did you find it easier designing a platform game with a licence?**
People have this interesting thing where they are magnetically drawn to brands. It doesn't really matter if the game beside it is better, they will still grab the branded game. That said, there are a lot of properties that just won't make good games and that's where things get complicated. So you need to do your research, but when you find a great licence it can actually be quite inspiring and sometimes you get to work with incredible talent.

**From a programming and design perspective, what are the pros and cons of a platform game?**
The biggest challenge was that there were lots of competitors. Nintendo didn't even make the fight fair either, as they'd give themselves bigger cartridges and ship at lower prices. In reality it was a challenging time, but it was also a really good time as it made you focus on raising your game. I remember looking at *Sonic The Hedgehog* as a giant kick in the ass. Yuki Naka was basically saying "You've been coasting, step it up!" That's really fun when you see someone else innovate in some way, then you feel the pressure to stop taking the easy path.

**Shiny achieved what few other studios could in creating a credible platform hero in *Earthworm Jim*, why do you feel the character succeeded where so many others failed?**
I often wonder if *Angry Birds* would be successful if it was called *The Catapult Game* and didn't have funny voices and exploding feathers. When you look at the thousands of games launched every year the most under-represented category is "humour". It's weird as we all LOVE to laugh! It seems to me like the biggest freebie if you design a game... Go for humour! People never seem to forget when they laughed at a game as it's a surprisingly rare experience. *Earthworm Jim* was probably more crazy (insane) than funny, but even that felt fresh.

**Do you think platformers could regain the crown?**
No question, it's a great genre, it just needs a fresh approach and plenty of humour and I bet it would be easy to make another hit platformer and I'm sure an indie team will pull it off.

**Have you ever considered a return to platformers?**
Yes, we've toyed with the idea, however, most of my friends from the past are knee-deep in projects so it's like herding cats. I don't know if it will ever be possible, but then again I think the new talent entering the industry now could breathe new life into the genre. Humour, that's the secret!



» [Mega Drive] The licence became a huge deal during the 16-bit period, with popular films like *Aladdin* becoming platformers.

## DID YOU KNOW?

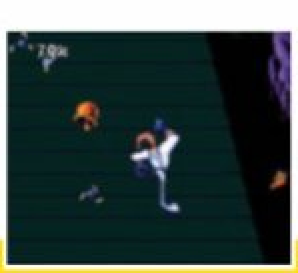
- *Castle Of Illusion* is called *I Love Mickey Mouse: Great Mysterious Castle Adventure* in Japan.
- The famous "Segaaaa!" chant first sounded in the Mega Drive version of *Sonic The Hedgehog*.
- Luigi and Mario are the same shape in *Super Mario World*, though Luigi lost the fat for the version that later appeared in *Super Mario All-Stars*.
- Sonic's sidekick Tail's first appearance was in the SMS version of *Sonic 2*, though his playable debut was in the Mega Drive version.
- 2007 saw rivals Mario and Sonic officially team up in *Mario & Sonic At The Olympic Games*.

fusing platform elements into other game genres, and sometimes it proved a recipe for success – DMA Design's *Lemmings* a prime example. Described as a puzzle platformer, *Lemmings* and games like *The Lost Vikings, King Arthur's World* and *Push Over* featured platformer elements to draw gamers in.

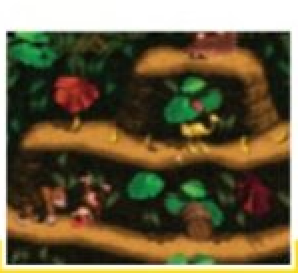
During the 16-bit generation another thing happened that further boosted the platformer's prominence. The games being played most by the core teenage demographic that many were trying to target were platformers, so as corporations began seeing games as a great outlet to promote and advertise their products, a flurry of 8 and 16-bit licenced platformers started appearing as a result.

On home computers you had had examples like *Zool* promoting Chupa Chups, *Superfrog* guzzling Lucozade and *James Pond 2: Codename RoboCod* advertising McVities' Penguins, while across the pond Virgin Interactive and programmer David Perry produced a string of successful examples with hits such *Mick & Mack Global Gladiators* for McDonalds, *Aladdin* for Disney, and *Cool Spot* for 7 Up. Perry's experience within the platform genre would culminate with the game *Earthworm Jim*, a creation by animator Doug TenNapel that David and his studio Shiny Entertainment turned into an award-winning platformer series.

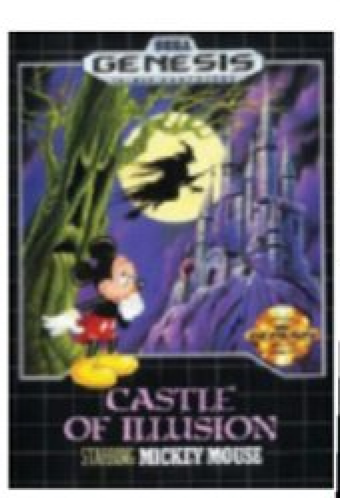
To put into perspective how popular the platformer had become, *Aladdin* was the third bestselling game for the Mega Drive, with *Sonic 2* in second and *Sonic The Hedgehog* taking the top spot. The bestselling Super Nintendo game was *Super Mario World*, followed by *Donkey Kong Country*. The 16-bit generation is the period the platformer ruled. However, like all kings, its reign would eventually come to an end.



**Earthworm Jim 1994**
This was one of the most successful 16-bit platformers to not come from a hardware manufacturer.



**Donkey Kong Country 1994**
The *Donkey Kong* series returns to screens with *Donkey Kong Country* on the SNES.




» While not original, this was notable for feeling like a proper cartoon come to life.

## THE ADDAMS FAMILY

Ocean tried adapting many film licences into platformers, and *The Addams Family* is probably its best one. Playing close to *Super Mario World*, it garnered rave reviews on its release. It looked great, was packed with levels, had great level design, was non-linear in design, and there was plenty to discover too.




## JAMES HIGGINS



### PROGRAMMER ON THE ADDAMS FAMILY

**Why do you feel platform games became so popular during the 8 and 16-bit generations?**
Probably a combination of many things. Programmers became increasingly comfortable with the hardware they were working on and with the 16-bit generation the systems had more power/resources allowing developers to break free from the single screen game and start to scroll stuff around. In a sense it was a natural evolution of platform game design. Shooters went from single screen (*Space Invaders*) to scrolling through landscapes (*Scramble*), and similarly games like *Donkey Kong* evolved into *Pac-Land* etc. This I think is completely in line with developers pushing their art and consumers becoming increasingly sophisticated with their expectations too.

**From a programming and game design perspective, what were the best aspects of working on a platformer?**
The best aspect for me was working in a genre that I enjoyed playing. I don't think there's necessarily a commonality to "best aspects" of working on a platformer. I'm sure some of the things I thought were best would be considered hellish by other developers. Bringing it all together is the best aspect, and working with a great designer and artist (Warren Lancashire) who pushed me to produce better work mostly through being inspired by what he was trying to achieve.

**Having done so with *The Addams Family*, what do you feel are the key ingredients to making a great platformer?**
The key ingredient is working with talented people and iterate, iterate and iterate. *The Addams Family* actually started on Amiga; we switched to SNES (and threw almost everything away) and at that point took a lot of inspiration from a certain Italian plumber. Then we spent a long time trying to get the basic controls down – how the player jumped; the distance they jumped and the height. Levels were refined and tweaked until it just flowed. Unusually for the time we had Gary Bracey stop by – almost daily – for a few hours and play it before he'd disappear off home and Warren and I would be left late into the night before we'd have to make a mad dash for the last bus home. That playtesting – whilst still developing – combined with some flexible tools for map building allowed us to refine and tweak until it was a fun game.

# 32-BIT GENERATION AWKWARD JUMPS AND TURNING 64

**The 32-bit era changed the landscape of gaming more than any other, we would argue. It marked something of a sea-change occurring within the industry, one in which 2D worlds, which had been refined over two generations, were fighting against alluring polygon constructive graphics and 3D worlds.**

The problem for platformer makers was that these worlds were, to begin with, not the best place for graphics and animation-packed platformers to really shine immediately. For those studios that had made their name and invested heavily in 2D gaming up to this point, it was like telling a popular and established 2D artist that they would need to start learning sculpting, and fast, if they wished to remain at the front.

This is not to say there aren't some great looking platformers to have emerged from this era. The Sega Saturn's 2.5D offerings *Clockwork Knight* and



» [N64] Nintendo's *Super Mario 64* was a revelation for the platform genre, shaping it for many years to come.

> **"Any game where you fully interact with a 3D background can trace its roots back to Mario 64"** GREGG MAYLES, DESIGNER

*Bug!* certainly captured their colourful look, and were popular enough to receive sequels, and this fence sitting style of platformer also had a decent presence on PlayStation with the likes of *Pandemonium*, and excellent Japanese offerings like *Tomba!* and *Klonoa*. These were also a few stunning looking pure 2D platformers too, perhaps best exemplified by *Rayman*, which put the extra memory and power of the next wave of consoles to good effect; using it to create giant textures, rich looking backgrounds and jaw-dropping animations.

One of the earliest 3D platformers to arrive on the PlayStation was *Jumping Flash!*, a unique first-person platformer/shooter that saw the player man a big robot bunny around a *Pilotwings*-style world – a style of first-person platformer that's perhaps most recently been seen in the form of free-running FPS/platformer *Mirror's Edge*. Interestingly, the company behind *Jumping Flash!*, Exact, released a similar style of game to *Jumping Flash!* the previous year in 1994. Called *Geograph Seal*, it went completely under the radar of many Western gamers by appearing on the Sharp X68000 Japanese home computer.

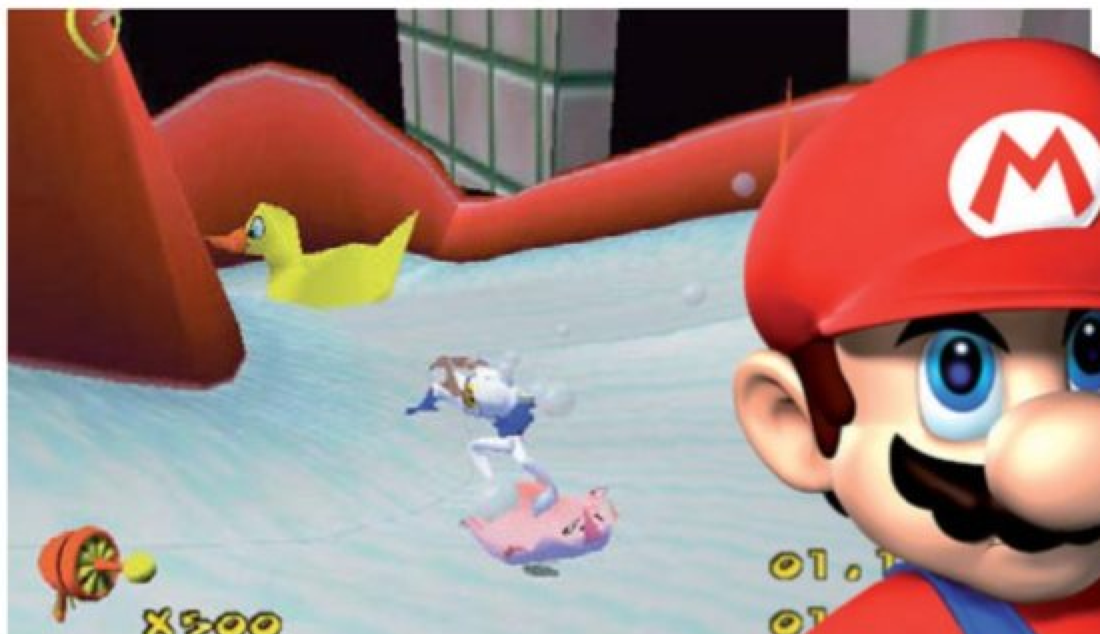
Working inside a new dimension meant platformer makers needed to start thinking more about perspective, the camera and controls. Part of a 2D platformer's appeal was that they were simple and intuitive, and so capturing the 'feel' in 3D would be just as important as nailing the look. Once again it was Nintendo who succeeded in providing the most used roadmap.

*Super Mario 64*, released for in 1996 for N64, marked another important release for the genre, raising the visual bar and immersive properties of platformers and helping making the genre popular once again. *Super Mario 64* is not solely responsible for the needle shift though, as this year also saw the release of *Crash Bandicoot* and *Tomb Raider* too.

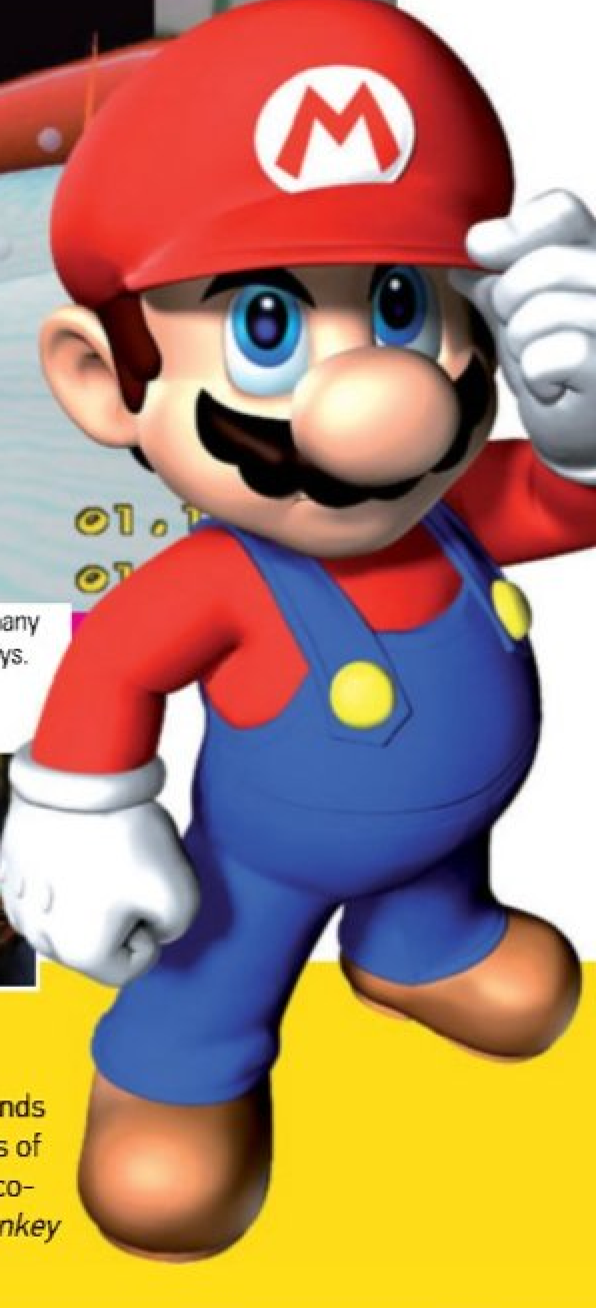
In the mid-to-late Nineties the 3D platformer began enjoyed another fruitful

## DID YOU KNOW?

- *Heart Of Darkness* took six years to create and was the first platformer to have a music score recorded by an orchestra.
- *Croc: Legend Of The Gobbos* was developed by Argonaut Software, of *Star Fox* (SNES) fame.
- Early 2.5D platformer *Bug!* featured a cameo from Sonic the Hedgehog, it sees him challenging players to a race.
- The *Tomba!* series is by Tokuro Fujiwara, who is best known for creating *Ghouls'n Ghosts* and producing the early *Mega Man* series.
- *Super Mario, Tomb Raider* and *Prince Of Persia* have all been adapted into live action movies.
- Lara Croft has been played by actresses Rhona Mitra, Nell McAndrew and Angelina Jolie, and was originally voiced by Shelley Blond.



» [PC] The third dimension was a testing time for the genre, with many popular 2D franchises failing to capture the magic of their 16-bit days.



## 32-BIT INNOVATIONS



**Geograph Seal**
**1994**
This impressive 3D shooter/platformer from developer Exact is the precursor to *Jumping Flash!*.



**Clockwork Knight**
**1994**
Early Saturn 2.5D platformer *Clockwork Knight* carries the *Donkey Kong Country* torch.



**Jumping Flash!!**
**1995**
Exact refines its first-person platformer concept with *Jumping Flash!!*, a game more platformer in design.



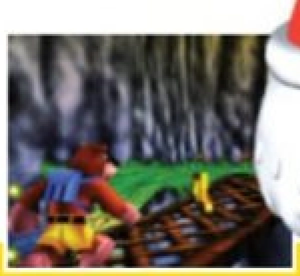
**Super Mario 64**
**1996**
*Super Mario 64* breathes new life into the platform genre and popularises 3D gaming.



**Crash Bandicoot**
**1996**
The 3D platformer that mixes side-scrolling with into-the-screen sections was well received.



**Tomb Raider**
**1996**
Core Design's cinematic platformer enters 3D with the release of the brilliant *Tomb Raider*.



**Banjo-Kazooie**
**1998**
*Banjo-Kazooie* blends brilliantly elements of *Mario 64* with the co-op elements of *Donkey Kong Country*.

time with releases like *Banjo-Kazooie*, *Spyro The Dragon* and *Donkey Kong 64* strengthening the status of the 3D platformer. Of course, as had happened before in the previous generation, this popularity also attracted rubbish and the disappointing likes of *Earthworm Jim 3D* and *Bubsy 3D* proved that an established face counted for little if the games behind them didn't measure up.

As the generation drew to a close the platformer was still enjoying popularity, but it was beginning to show signs of losing its hold. The two best-selling games on Sega Saturn were both coin-op conversions (*Virtua Fighter 2* and *Sega Rally Championship*), while the bestselling game on PlayStation was *Gran Turismo*, followed by *Final Fantasy VII*.

And then there was *GoldenEye* on N64. A real game changer, this seminal FPS title introduced console gamers to the fun that could be had from having virtual gunfights with friends – something that PC gamers had been experiencing for years. The console FPS seed had been firmly planted in this generation, and as the flower bed became more crowded, the platform landscape began to look less rosy.

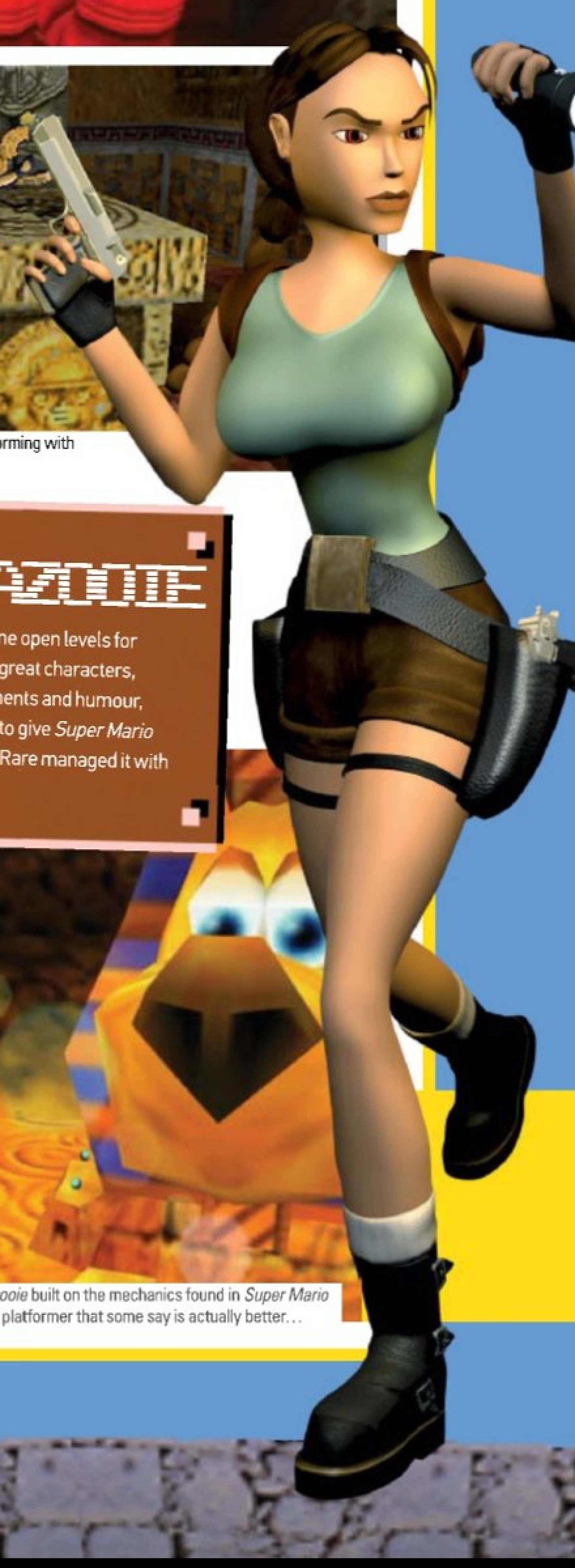




» [PlayStation] *Crash Bandicoot* was a big success for Naughty Dog and received numerous sequels.



» [PC] *Tomb Raider* combined traditional platforming with gunplay to deliver a truly unique experience.





## GREGG MAYLES

### DESIGNER ON DONKEY KONG COUNTRY AND BANJO-KAZOOIE

**How important do you feel *Super Mario 64* was to the platform genre?**

At the risk of sounding like yet another spin of this record played endlessly throughout the industry, it was one of those seminal moments. Looking beyond the obvious technical accomplishment, as a designer I was stunned (and in awe) that they [Nintendo] had discarded the staple need for pixel perfect precision of every *Mario* game to date and replaced it with looser playful control, lazy pace and something that felt more like a story driven adventure. I also believe that *Mario 64*'s importance and legacy goes beyond platform games. Any game where you fully interact with a 3D background (e.g. *Assassin's Creed* and the *Drake* games) can trace its roots back to *Mario 64*.

**What did 3D and the N64's power allow you to achieve over the previous generation?**

We were able to create more believable words (you don't view the real world in 2D) that had a sense of space and scale. Now we could have things that were as big as real life or even larger! The emotions that could be evoked in these environments was also a major advancement. It's something we tried to use in *Banjo* a lot – the vertigo standing on top of a really high point, the claustrophobia of being in a small dark space and the sheer childlike joy of running through a field.

**What problems do you have to consider when making 3D platformers?**

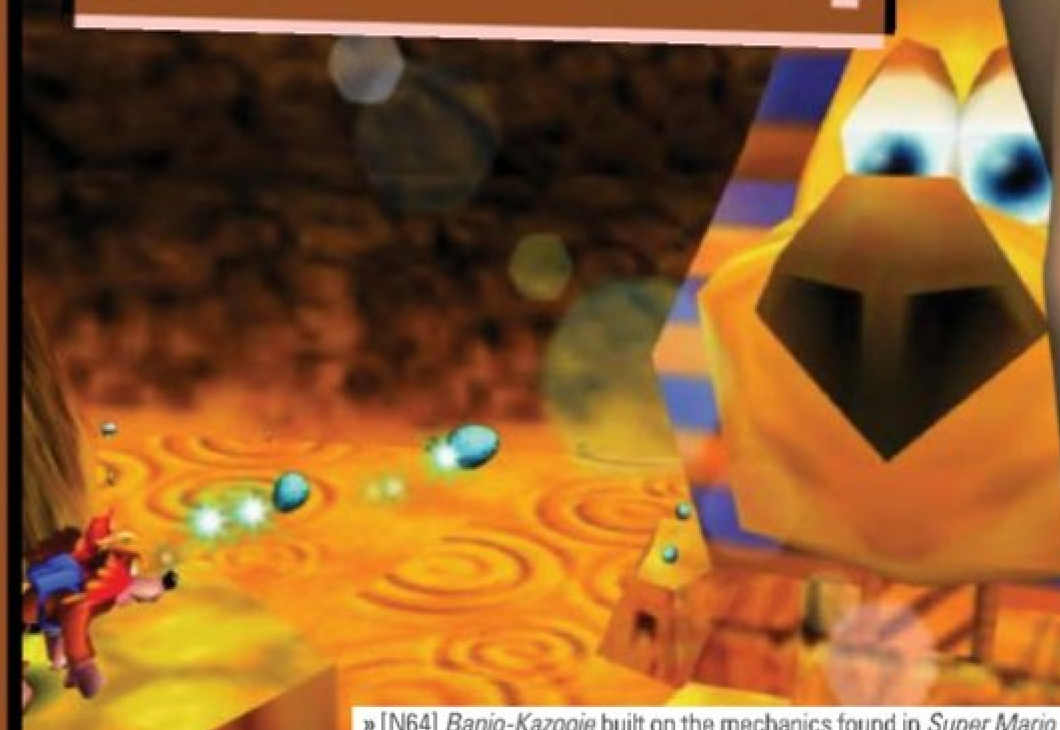
Probably the biggest problem is being able to judge height and distance accuracy. Humans view the real world in 3D via two eyes, but 3D environments in (current) games are being displayed on a 2D screen. It's a bit like walking around in the real world with one eye closed – try it! So you have to allow for this in what you ask of the player. Another issue is working out what people can and can't see of the environment, or more importantly what you want them to see – how you use the environment to hide, introduce or highlight different areas for different reasons.

**Do you think the platform genre could ever regain its crown?**

I do think gamers' tastes have changed and widened dramatically, with the popularity crown having been firmly wedged on shooters' heads for last decade and a half. I'm sure there will always be a place for them – as they offer a combination of excitement, exploration and fun not matched by any other genre.

## BANJO-KAZOOIE

■ A massive game world – with nine open levels for you to run around in – packed with great characters, beautiful visuals, memorable moments and humour, very few 3D platformers managed to give *Super Mario 64* a genuine run for its money, but Rare managed it with *Banjo-Kazooie*.



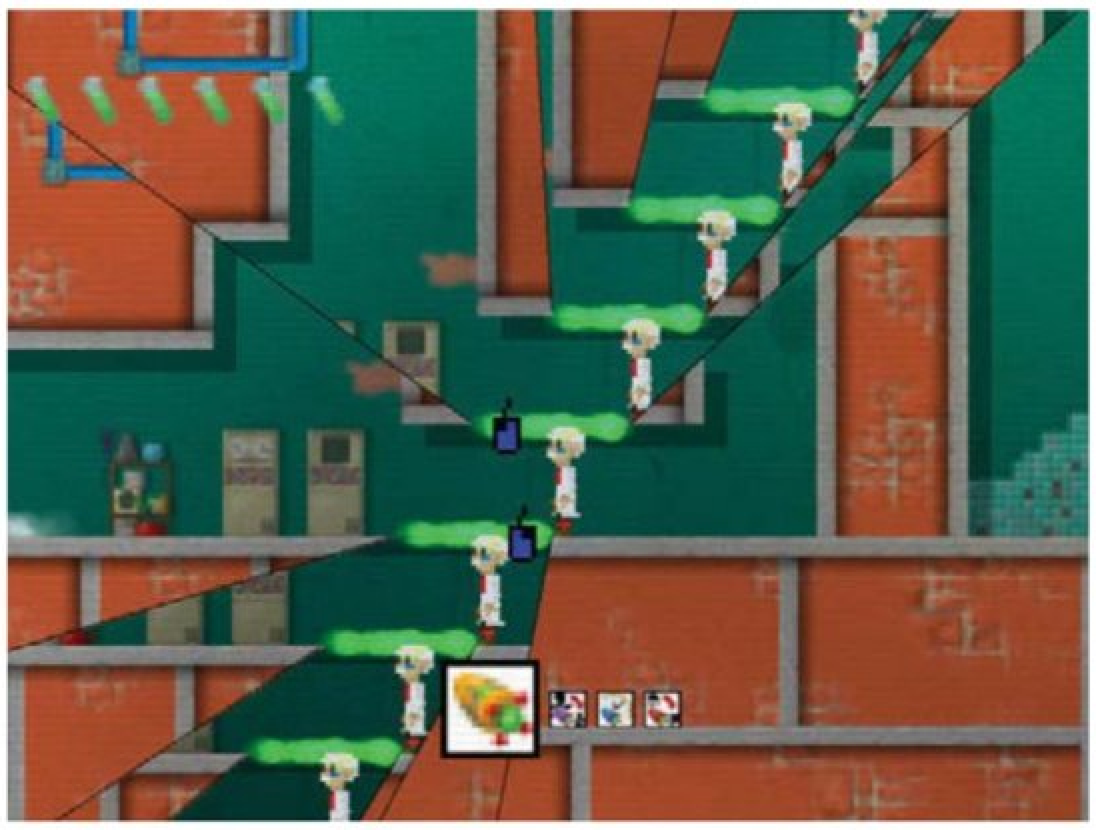
» [N64] *Banjo-Kazooie* built on the mechanics found in *Super Mario 64*, and delivered a platformer that some say is actually better…

# 128-BIT TO PRESENT ENTER THE INDIES





» [Wii] Nintendo remains one of the few triple-A publishers still innovating within the genre. This is the superb *Super Mario Galaxy*.



» [PC] Indie developers are typically the innovators of the genre nowadays. This is the brilliant *Gateways*.

**As the 128-bit generation began platformers continued to struggle, losing precious ground to the ever-popular FPS.** *Super Mario 64* also proved problematic, casting a huge shadow many later platformers were unable to escape from. Don't believe us? Then look at the few innovations to the genre that were introduced during the period. Sonic may have made the jump to 3D with Dreamcast's *Sonic Adventure*, but he hardly pushed the envelope in the same way his archrival had.

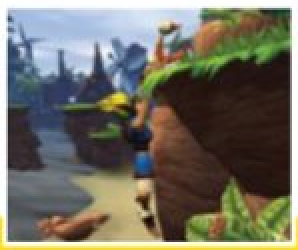
Sequels to other popular platform franchises followed, like *Crash Bandicoot* and *Spyro*, but they continued to suffer from many of the issues that most platformers had struggled with during the previous generation. Even Nintendo wasn't infallible, as while *Super Mario Sunshine* introduced the innovative FLUDD mechanic, it was let down by irritating camera issues at times. There were still gems to be found, particularly *Metroid Prime*, which, like *Tomb Raider* before it, seamlessly blended platforming with shooting and exploration elements, but actual innovation was well hidden.

Naughty Dog's *Jak And Daxter: The Precursor Legacy* created a huge persistent open world that featured virtually no loading and allowed you to finish off half-completed sidequests long after you'd first started them, which greatly made up for its otherwise conventional gameplay. *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time* was another impressive addition to the genre. Building on the cinematic elements that creator Jordan Mechner had no doubt first dreamt of when he had worked on the Apple II original, *Sands Of Time* is important, as, like *Super Mario 64*, it's a 3D platformer that captures the speed and slickness of its 2D counterparts. It's safe to say platformers survived the 128-bit generation, but things were about to take a turn for the better…

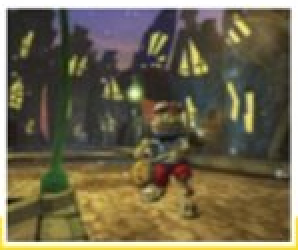
In today's market, platformers still lag behind more popular genres but they are slowly making a comeback. The genre remains extremely popular for Nintendo, with its *Mario* games constantly selling in the millions, while Sega also benefits from the popularity of its mascot Sonic. Interestingly, while Nintendo's 2D



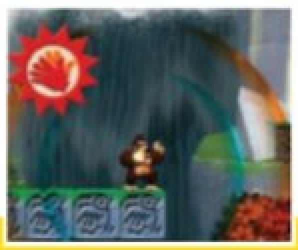
## 128-BIT+ INNOVATIONS



**Jak And Daxter: The Precursor Legacy 2001**
In additional to its seamless loading, Jak and Daxter's world is persistent, meaning nothing ever resets.



**Blinx The Time Sweeper 2002**
This early mascot for Microsoft was notable for his ability to manipulate time in a number of ways.



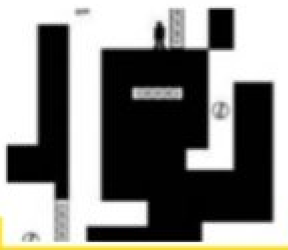
**Donkey Kong Jungle Beat 2004**
Use the GameCube's *DK* Bongos to control *Donkey Kong*'s movement in this classy platformer.



**Super Mario Galaxy 2007**
Nintendo's first 3D platformer for Wii was jam-packed with imaginative level design.



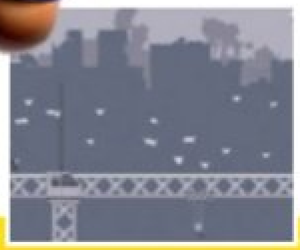
**Jet Set Willy Online 2007**
Excellent MMO style platformer that allowed multiple players to navigate the 8-bit platformer.



**Shift 2008**
Innovative puzzle platformer where you flip and invert each single screen level to reach the exit.



**Mirror's Edge 2008**
Dice's beautiful first-person platformer turned parkour (and platforming) into a videogame art form.



**Canabalt 2009**
This stylistic platformer was the first endless runner, recently converted to the Commodore 64.



» *Metroidvania* clone *Cave Story* came first, but *Braid* did a far better jump of marrying independent gaming with innovative game design.

adventures have become rather stale, it has once again began innovating with its 3D titles, with both *Super Mario Galaxy* and *Super Mario 3D Land* pushing the boundaries of what gamers expect from current generation platformers. Sadly, the same can't be said for Sonic, who prefers to rely on crazy gimmicks like giant swords and lycanthropy.

One of the surprise stories of recent years has been Media Molecule's excellent *LittleBigPlanet* franchise, which has now spawned three sequels and a *Mario Kart*-style spin-off. While the platforming itself is rather conventional, its huge draw is the excellent editing tools and user generated content surrounding it, giving gamers access to a seemingly never ending supply of new content. It's quickly become one of Sony's most popular franchises in the last four years and turned lead character Sackboy into the company's unofficial mascot.

With today's game industry being big business, fewer and fewer companies are willing to take risks on a genre that's no longer seen to be the safe bet it once was during the 8 and 16-bit periods. While this means there's little action from triple-A publishers, it has allowed indie and mobile developers to start taking centre stage.

Jonathan Blow's gorgeous brainteaser *Braid* is arguably one of the most famous examples, blending traditional platform elements with clever time-based puzzle mechanics that worked far better than efforts like *Blinx The Time Sweeper* or *Prince Of Persia: Sands Of Time*. It felt like a breath of fresh air when it was released in 2008, and many similar games followed. 2008 also saw the debut of Derek Yu's *Spelunky*, a brutally tough as nails platformer that married the popular genre to the equally ancient *Rogue*-like and finished it off with delightful 8-bit visuals. In fact, retro-styled visuals have become quite the go-to hallmark for indie developers, with everything from *Cave Story* to *Super Meat Boy* and the excellent *Metroid* clone *Gateways* recapturing the distinct style of the genre's glory days.

## DID YOU KNOW?

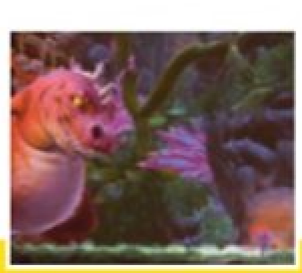
- *Mario* continues to be a huge money-maker for Nintendo. *New Super Mario Brothers* shifted over 29 million units.
- Naughty Dog wanted a change for later *Jak And Daxter* games and turned them into *GTA* clones.
- Sackboy has certainly made an impression. The original *LittleBigPlanet* has shifted 4.5 million units since launch.
- Watch *Indie Game: The Movie* to get a better insight into how and why indie developers make the games they do.
- *Fez* was an epic two-man project by Phil Fish and Renaud Bédard, funded by the Canadian government.
- *Sly Cooper And The Thievius Raccoonus* was notable for building upon the stealth elements that were first introduced in *Super Mario 64*.



**VVVVVV**
**2010**
This platformer from Terry Cavanagh takes out the jump button and replaces it with cool gravity-switching.



**Fez**
**2012**
A truly clever platformer that cleverly juxtaposes 2D sprites with a hidden third dimension world.



**Giana Sisters: Twisted Dreams 2012**
A quirky platformer that switches between two characters that exist in two vastly different worlds.

## DEREK YU
### CREATOR OF SPELUNKY



**Why do you think so many indie platformers take their style from retro games?**
This is mainly true for freeware indie games, since many commercial platformers use painted artwork or 3D graphics. But as for why retro platformers are so popular in general… I think it's a combination of easiness and nostalgia. Nice NES or C64-style pixel art [is] doable even if you're not the best artist.

**Why do you think there is more innovation in indie platformers compared to mainstream?**
In all honesty, there are more indie developers working on platformers these days and they know that they have to try new things to stand out. They can't rely on a well-known brand.

**Many saw the 16-bit era as the best time for platformers. Why do you think this was?**
That was a time when the very best designers and programmers in the industry were working on them. These days fewer professionals are working on platform games.

**Why do you think platformers are nowhere near as popular as they used to be?**
The advent of 3D gaming is what did it – the focus moved from 2D side-scrolling titles to 3D first and third-person titles, and that's where so much of the talent went. Thankfully, platformers are still alive thanks to indie game development and high profile characters like Sonic and Mario. It's still a wonderful genre that deserves good games. I think the glory days of platformers are over, but that doesn't mean it's dead by any means.

**What do you feel are the best example of indie platformers and why?**
My favorite indie platformers are *Dustforce*, *Cave Story*, *Braid*, *Super Meat Boy*, *VVVVVV*, *Ninja Senki*, and *Nikujin*. I also really like *Samurai Gunn*, although it hasn't been released yet (one of the benefits of being a game developer!). And if I may, I feel that my own platformer, *Spelunky*, is worth mentioning! People seem to enjoy it, at the very least.

## SPELUNKY

Derek Yu has made several platformers in his career, but *Spelunky* is easily his best. It's a fantastic game that combines traditional platforming with the hardcore difficulty of the Rogue genre. The end result is an amazingly brutal game with finely honed gameplay that constantly pulls you back for one more go.






» [PC] *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time* was a huge cinematic jump for the genre, taking narration to a whole new level.

Mobile gaming has also made a big impact, with developers finding clever ways to get around the lack of buttons found on most devices. This innovation even led to a brand new sub-genre, the 'Endless Runner', which first appeared in *Canabalt* and can now be found in everything from *Temple Run* to *Robot Unicorn Attack*, where the character is always moving and the player must guide them through/around obstacles.

Platformers may not have the success that they enjoyed during gaming's early years, but as gaming starts to return to a more casual market it's quite possible that this much loved genre will once again start to become synonymous with future generations of gamers.

# Future Classic

*Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come*







## INFO

- **Featured System:** Wii
- **Year:** 2008
- **Publisher:** Rising Star Games
- **Developer:** Grasshopper Manufacture
- **Key People:** Goichi Suda (director, writer, game designer), Yusuke Kozaki (character designer), Masafumi Takada (composer)

## GO DEEPER

- ***No More Heroes*** **is the only original Grasshopper title that performed well enough to justify a sequel.**
- **Johnny Knoxville was the primary point of inspiration for Travis Touchdown's visual design.**



# 31. NO MORE HEROES

***We step back into the garden of madness with Suda51's brilliant assassin tale, one of the only Wii games ever released to get motion control right***

### THE BACKGROUND

*No More Heroes* started coming together quite early on in the Wii's life cycle – director Goichi Suda and Japanese publisher Marvelous were quite convinced they could find an adult audience on the emerging Nintendo platform, and the idea of the game being a sword-based action title came together before Suda was aware of the console's motion-control capabilities; the two events just happened to tie in nicely. The director decided to use motion control sparingly as part of *No More Heroes*' design, realising that players would get tired if everything was contingent on using the Wiimote. Suda51 believed that this would be the type of game people would pick up on Wii after they'd lost interest in family-oriented titles.

While Grasshopper's games traditionally didn't do that well commercially, Suda51 deliberately engineered *No More Heroes* to earn "indie respect" while having "profit of the mainstream", targeting Western players with its mix of pop culture inspirations. The team at Grasshopper built an all-new engine to support the open world of Santa Destroy, the kind of ambitious structure the team had never created before. Being a relatively early mature Wii title, *No More Heroes* was Grasshopper's best-selling game ever at the time, finding little success in Japan but delivering notably decent numbers in the US and Europe.

### THE GAME

After a number of low-selling cult hits like *Killer7* and *Flower, Sun And Rain*, *No More Heroes* felt like Goichi Suda's best attempt to actually sell his unique style of game to a wider audience. With a main character that has shades of Brad Pitt from *Fight Club*, a lightsaber facsimile as the main weapon and an open world to explore, it had the trappings of a more popular type of title – but really, this was just a commercially-friendly cover for more fascinating Suda51 oddness. The look of the protagonist, Travis Touchdown, turns out to be a front for how pathetic and dorky this wannabe

## Things of note



### Retro Touchdown

A lot of *No More Heroes*' interesting visual hallmarks are retro-themed, such as leaderboards, power-ups and one memorable level that turns into a side-scrolling shooter.



### Heavenly Star

Whether a tie-in or a deliberate stylistic touch, the song *Heavenly Star* by the Genki Rockets plays everywhere, the band masterminded by Tetsuya Mizuguchi himself.



### Sylvia Calling

One of the neater touches with the Wiimote's built-in microphone was the way you could answer phone calls from Travis's tormentor, Sylvia, just before each boss battle.



### Paradise Lost

The Grasshopper hit found its way to PS3 in an extraordinary-looking port, but without motion control the redubbed *Heroes' Paradise* loses something in translation.



### Struggling On

A less ambitious but still brilliant sequel to *No More Heroes*, subtitled *Desperate Struggle*, was released in 2010. Suda51 always planned on doing a third game.




» **[Wii]** The cel-shaded look is another factor in why *No More Heroes* holds up well – the environments are threadbare, but the characters look tremendously detailed.



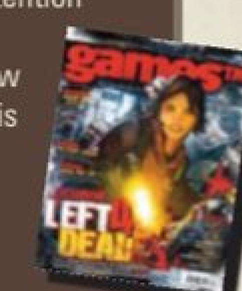
» [Wii] One of the weirder moneymaking pursuits is picking litter using the Wiimote. It's still fun, somehow.



» [Wii] Travis's bike matches his nerdy persona.

## What the press thought

**games™**
**Score: 9/10**
"We're tempted to say that there are few Wii games as deserving of your attention as *No More Heroes* but then there are few games as good as this on any platform."



**n-Revolution**
**Score: 9/10**
"Inventive and massively rewarding. If more games had personality and style like *No More Heroes* does, the world of games would be a much more interesting place."

assassin really is, while the open world is a bizarre backdrop that almost has no purpose as a *GTA*-style hub. Yet it all matters, it all factors perfectly into a strange little world of brutality and meaninglessness that feels so specific in the way it's put together, a wonderfully satisfying game that truly feels driven by the mind of its creator.

*No More Heroes* is essentially about this series of boss battles, each with a varying scenario preceding them, like a more violent take on *Scott Pilgrim*. Travis is trying to become the number one assassin in Santa Destroy (basically Santa Monica, hence why it's full of poser assholes) in order to win the 'heart' of Sylvia (it's not her heart he's after), a manipulative and beautiful blonde femme fatale. It's like the world's strangest metaphor for working too hard to sustain a bad relationship – Travis meets various psychopaths on his journey to the top, and on the way, you increasingly question the worth of his relentless killing in the pursuit of number one status.

Herein lies a huge part of *No More Heroes*' appeal: the boss battles are incredibly well-executed, and each is a character worthy of a game in and of themselves, each born from different elements of pop culture. From a ridiculous superhero to a vengeful schoolgirl to an old crooner in a baseball stadium, they're all insane reflections of Travis's own serial killer mentality, and as the DNA of what holds the story together, they're as intelligently conceived as the boss battles in a Kojima title. They each require different strategies and sometimes lateral thinking in much the same way.

Mechanically, *No More Heroes* still feels terrific because it doesn't primarily play like a Wii game – it simply uses the motion controller to enhance the core experience, letting you swing Travis's beam katana (they couldn't call it a lightsaber, after all) as a finishing move or QTE-based attack only, rather than waving it throughout like the swordplay in the dire *Red Steel*. Otherwise, this feels as refined as any top-end hack-and-slash title, the sort of thing you could imagine Capcom making at its best, when equally memorable stories and characters drove its projects. *No More Heroes* offers a vision of what motion control could have been were it not primarily used to draw in people who had no interest in games to begin with.

### WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

The Wii is synonymous with lightweight casual experiences – so it's strange, then, that *No More Heroes* is exactly the opposite of that, one of a very rare breed of high-end hardcore games to appear on Nintendo's frequently criticised platform. Like other games in Suda51's back catalogue, *No More Heroes* is shamelessly idiosyncratic and loveably odd, yet this is the first time his interesting stylistic and storytelling ideas aren't lost between the cracks of rough game design.

The combat is so sharp, capturing the satisfaction of swinging a lightsaber (or equivalent) in a way that no *Star Wars* tie-in has ever been able to, and while the violence may be deliberately explosive, *No More Heroes*' story manages to end on a note that really makes you question Travis's fairly deplorable behaviour as a character.

The open world backdrop may be fairly superfluous, but there's nonetheless something uniquely compelling about living Travis's strange little life, hanging out in his apartment with his pet cat and riding around on an *Akira*-style motorcycle while the catchy song *Heavenly Star* by Q Entertainment's Genki Rockets plays at every single opportunity as a kind of bizarre motif. It's so precise a vision, that it's a pleasure to occupy it as a player, and a reminder that not every contemporary release on a console is driven by boneheaded market research.

# PlayStation 2: A Celebration

2000 - 2013

**As Sony finally puts the PlayStation 2 out to pasture, Damien McFerran takes a look back at some of the moments and franchises in the life of the world's most popular videogame console**

**The PlayStation 2 is officially the best-selling console of all time, having sold an incredible 155 million units worldwide since its launch in 2000.** Sony's sophomore system had a tough act to follow, coming after the phenomenally popular 32-bit PlayStation, but it managed to overcome early teething troubles related to weak software to achieve commercial and critical acclaim with a string of million-selling classics, such as *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*, *Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec* and *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*. The console was also notable for providing many users with their first taste of DVD movie playback – a factor that not only aided the adoption of the format in many parts of the world, but also gave the PlayStation 2 an edge over its early rival, the Sega Dreamcast. It also gave the console an advantage over both the Microsoft Xbox and Nintendo GameCube – the former only supporting DVD playback through an additional accessory and the latter not having movie support at all. But Sony's console wasn't just good for watching movies, and remains a phenomenal system, with a library that is bursting with classic titles. This year, Sony discontinued production of the system after 13 successful years. So grab your DualShock and make sure you've got plenty of space on that 8MB Memory Card, because this is going to get emotional.











### PlayStation announcement March 1999

The official PlayStation 2 announcement is made, a move that effectively ends the Sega Dreamcast's chances of establishing a significant share of the market. Millions of existing 32-bit PlayStation owners decide to keep their powder dry for the forthcoming console rather than switch allegiance to Sega.

### Launch
**March 2000**

The PlayStation 2 launches in Japan with 10 titles including *Ridge Racer V* and *Street Fighter EX3*. The system would sell an incredible 980,000 units in 24 hours, proving that the original 32-bit system had been no fluke.

### TimeSplitters October 2000



Epic first-person shooter title *TimeSplitters* launches alongside the console. "*TimeSplitters* was Free Radical Design's first game – the game that would prove that we were a "real" company and distinguish us from the countless other startups that were being overambitious and failing," says programmer Steve Ellis. "We were starting from nothing so we had to build our team, our tech, our tools and the game all at the same time – on a new platform. It was incredibly hard work but it was an incredibly exciting time too. As for the game itself, we were aiming for something distinctive and unique, something different to the norms of the genre. I was very happy with the end result."


SONY
RESET
PlayStation 2
MEMORY CARD
MAGICGATE
SONY
PlayStation
SELECT
START



## North American launch October 2000

The system's North American launch is just as successful as its Japanese one, and the PlayStation 2 hits store shelves with 26 games, including *Dead Or Alive 2: Hardcore*, *Fantavision* and *Silent Scope*. The console nets Sony a cool $250 million in the space of 24 hours, with all 500,000 shipped units selling out immediately. A month later Sony would complete a hat trick with a blockbusting European launch that boasted 16 titles from day one.

## Devil May Cry August 2001

Hideki Kamiya's *Devil May Cry* series makes its debut on the PlayStation 2. Dante's first adventure is effortlessly cool and incredibly playable, setting a new benchmark for 3D action titles. The 2003 sequel was something of a disappointment, but the third game is considered to be one of the PlayStation 2's finest. Capcom recently rebooted the franchise with *DmC Devil May Cry* on PS3 and Xbox 360, which was developed by UK-based Ninja Theory. A HD trilogy is also available for PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360.



## Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons Of Liberty

**November 2001**

Konami launches the much-hyped *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons Of Liberty*. The sequel to the best-selling PlayStation original, the game features the return of the famous Solid Snake, but the actual lead character is a whiny kid called Raiden – the same Raiden who would turn into an ass-kicking cyborg in 2013's *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*. Popular with critics and consumers alike, *Sons Of Liberty* is considered to be one of the first "postmodern" videogames due to its subversive storyline and willingness to break genre conventions.

## Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec April 2001



*Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec* launches in Japan. "*Gran Turismo 3* ended my unconditional love for the franchise," says famed videogame journalist Julian Rignall. "It pushed the PS2 to new heights with incredible graphics and sound, yet there was something way too familiar about its gameplay. In many respects, it felt like a shiny new body sitting on the same old chassis. They say familiarity breeds contempt: and ultimately, that's what I began to feel here. *GT3* was a shiny new copy of my favourite old thing. I loved it. But my passion was cooled."

## Grand Theft Auto

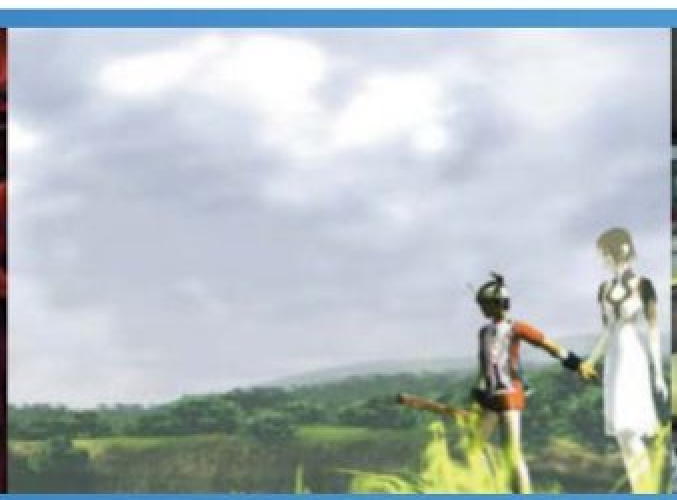
**October 2001**

Rockstar releases *Grand Theft Auto III*, the first time the series was portrayed in full 3D. Predictably, the game causes massive controversy for its depiction of violent crime, but it also sells by the bucketload, breathes new life into the franchise and inspires a legion of copycat clones.











## Final Fantasy X July 2001

*Final Fantasy X* is released in Japan. As the first *Final Fantasy* outing on the PS2, it receives a massive amount of hype and goes on to shift 6.6 million units globally – more than justifying its lofty budget of more than $30 million. 2003 saw the launch of *Final Fantasy X-2*, making this the first game in the series to have a truly direct sequel with the same setting and many of the same characters.

## Playstation 2 Network Adapter July 2001

The PlayStation 2 officially goes online in Japan with the release of the PlayStation 2 Network Adapter and the launch of its online gaming service. The North American service would arrive in August 2002 and the European equivalent in June the next year.

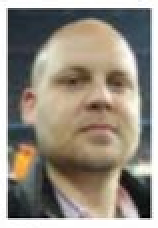


## Ico September 2001

One of the most acclaimed titles in the PlayStation 2's library, *Ico* is released in Japan. Fumito Ueda and Kenji Kaido's masterpiece employed a technique known as "subtraction design", where superfluous gameplay elements were removed to ensure a high level of immersive storytelling. It remains a classic of the interactive entertainment medium. Just don't mention the horrific US box art.



## Pro Evolution Soccer
**November 2001**



Alongside *Metal Gear Solid 2*, Konami kicks off the best-selling *Pro Evo Soccer* series. "As soon as the first code for *ISS Pro Evolution Soccer* came in, it was obvious it was something very special," comments *PES* team leader, Jon Murphy. "To watch the series grow, expand, and win over a legion of fans was a fantastic thing to be a part of. And to see the team constantly outdo themselves as we hit *PES5* and then *PES6* was inspirational."







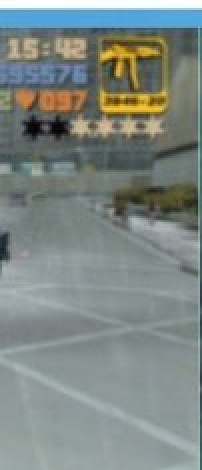
## The Getaway December 2002
Team Soho's ambitious *The Getaway* hits UK store shelves after months of intense hype. Originally intended as a launch title, the game's development was delayed due to the scope of the project. An impressive achievement from a technical standpoint, the gameplay failed to meet critical expectation. Director Brendan McNamara would go on to create *LA Noire*.

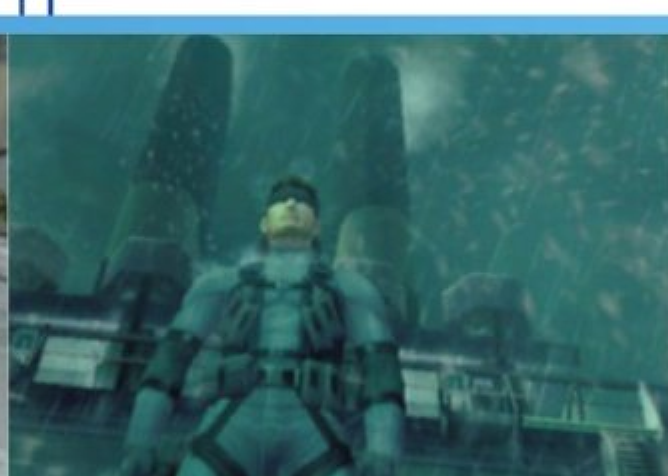
## PSX December 2003
Sony releases its digital video recorder and PlayStation 2 combo – the PSX – in Japan. This is the first piece of hardware to showcase the famous XrossMediaBar, which was subsequently used on the PlayStation Portable, PlayStation 3, and various Sony TVs and Blu-ray players. The system was not a commercial success and was never released outside of its homeland, but is highly collectable today.




## Jak And Daxter December 2001
Following on from the success of *Crash Bandicoot*, development studio Naughty Dog releases zany 3D platformer *Jak And Daxter*. It eventually sells 4.2 million copies globally and establishes yet another successful PlayStation franchise. Naughty Dog would go on to create *Uncharted* for the PlayStation 3.

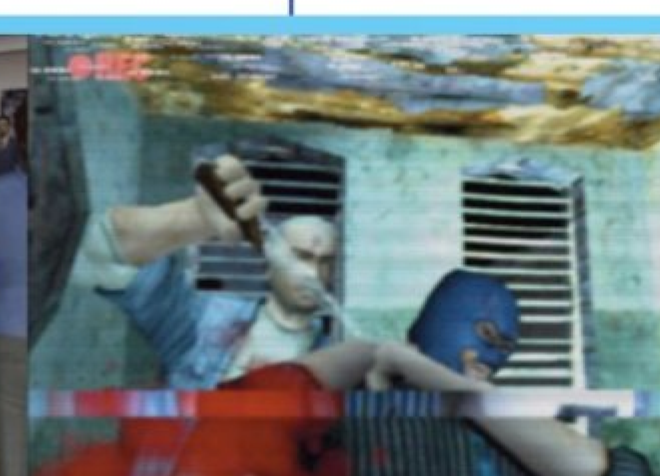
## Manhunt November 2003
Rockstar follows up the infamous *Grand Theft Auto* with grim murder simulator *Manhunt*, a game so chilling that even its creators felt uneasy during development. The game would be implicated in the murder of 14-year-old Stefan Pakeerah from Leicestershire, UK, but the police and courts would later dismiss any reliable connection. It was followed by a sequel in 2007.

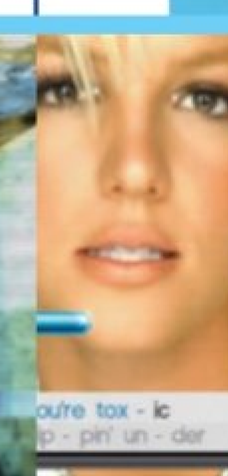












## EyeToy October 2003
EyeToy is launched. This diminutive piece of hardware would arguably pave the way for motion-based gaming on Microsoft's Kinect and Nintendo's Wii. Sony would eventually go on to sell ten million EyeToy cameras.



## SingStar
**May 2004**

Sony's attempt to cash in on the karaoke craze – *SingStar* – is released. Incredibly, over 70 different SKUs of the game have been published in PAL territories, covering a wide range of musical genres and no doubt causing much distress to sleeping neighbours in the process.



## Katamari Damacy September 2004

Keita Takahashi's *Katamari Damacy* is released in Japan, and quickly gains a cult following which would eventually propel it towards a release in North America. Takahashi claimed later that he had no wish for the game to be seen as innovative or original; instead, he was driven by a desire to bring fun back into gaming.

## UK Drop

The UK experiences a crippling shortage of PS2 Slimline consoles in Dec '04 thanks to a vessel blocking the Suez Canal for two weeks and preventing shipments from China getting through to Europe. UK PS2 hardware sales drop from around 70,000 consoles a week to just 6,000 due to lack of available stock.

## Killzone November 2004

*Killzone* – described by many as Sony's Halo beater – hits the market. "*Killzone* made the PS2 gritty, hardcore and uncompromising," says the game's producer, Alistair Burns. "For players, it has produced over ten years or rollercoaster hype, epic story and badass action. I remember players posting the times they took to complete our demo levels – over and over again. *Killzone* involved hundreds of people… I'll always be proud of it, Guerrilla and the people involved – and many still are – I doff my cap to you all!"



## PS2 Slim September 2004

Sony announces the PlayStation 2 Slimline – a smaller and lighter version of the original system. The front-loading disc tray is replaced by a cheaper top-loading drive and the internal power supply is removed. Sadly, the omission of the expansion bay means the new-look console lacks support for the internal hard drive accessory – which renders the console incompatible with *Final Fantasy XI*, an online adventure that requires the HDD to run.

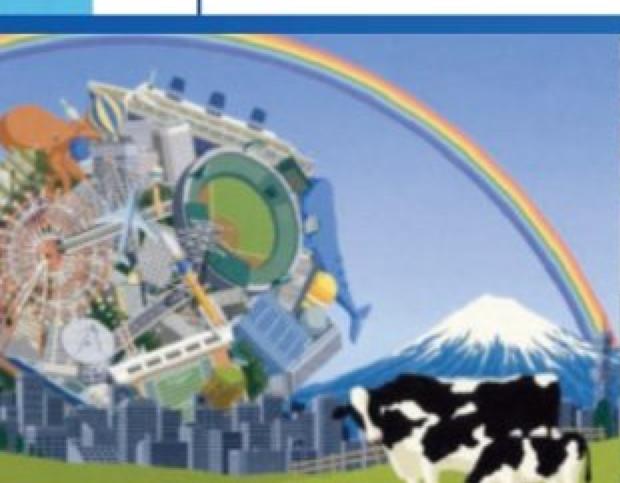


## Monster Hunter September 2004

For many *Monster Hunter* was the natural evolution of Sega's *Phantasy Star Online* franchise. It featured the same focus on online play, and the same ginormous monsters to defeat. The difference here though was the medieval setting and the interesting new focus on levelling up your character. Unlike *Phantasy Star Online*, you don't go up in levels or receive experience points, instead you evolve your weapons and armour with resources you find in the wilds or take from defeated foes. It appeared in Japan in March 2004, with the European version arriving in May 2005.

## Dragon Quest VIII
**November 2004**

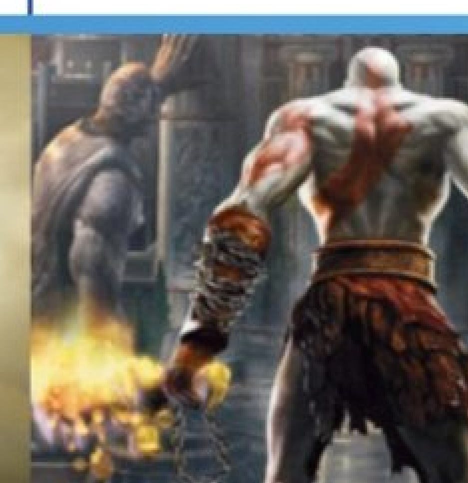
*Dragon Quest VIII: Journey Of The Cursed King* is released in Japan. The first game in the massively popular RPG series to boast fully 3D environments, *Dragon Quest VIII* would sell an incredible three million copies in its first week of sale in its homeland. The North American release would take place the following year, with Euro gamers having to wait until 2006.











## Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas
**October 2004**

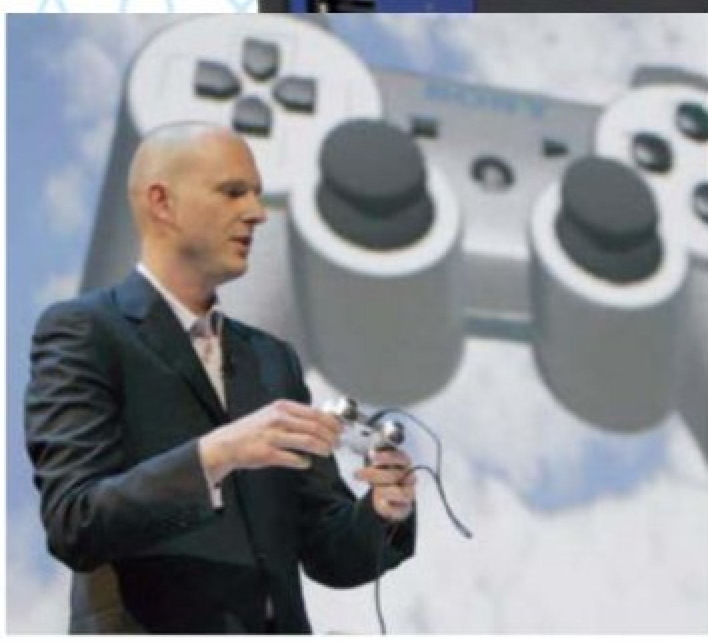
The PS2's best-selling game, *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, is released. It would go on to sell over 17 million copies worldwide. Offering a massive open world environment – with no loading times – it became infamous when the "Hot Coffee" mod appeared, propelling it to new levels of controversy.



## God Of War March 2005

Spartan warrior Kratos begins his bloody legacy with the PlayStation 2 title *God Of War*. Developed by Santa Monica Studio and directed by the outspoken David Jaffe, the game combines Greek mythology with a degree of violence usually only seen in titles like *Mortal Kombat*. The game would eventually sell in excess of 4.6 million units worldwide, and launched one of Sony's most popular franchises. *God Of War: Ascension* is the most recent entry.



## Phil Harrison September 2005

Sony Computer Entertainment creates Sony Computer Entertainment Worldwide Studios and installs Phil Harrison as president. Harrison was a key member of the team that launched both the original 32-bit PlayStation and PlayStation 2, but has since parted ways with the firm and now works at rival Microsoft.

## Guitar Hero November 2005



*Guitar Hero* makes its debut on the PlayStation 2, complete with its iconic guitar controller peripheral. "*Guitar Hero* meant so much to the many people involved with it," explains producer John Tam. "In many ways we see the game as a genre-defining game for the western market. We were a fledgling publisher with only a couple of people with any experience in the game industry at all but our goals were very clear. We wanted to engage gamers through music and specifically designed peripherals in the same way that it had taken over in Asia. What was magical was that it was the involvement of over a hundred people that all had the same vision to make the little known "plastic guitar game" such a runaway success. *Guitar Hero* was basically our industry's tribute to rock music."



## Kaz Hirai November 2006

Ken Kutaragi (pictured) is replaced as President of Sony Computer Entertainment by Kaz Hirai, former president of SCE America. Kutaragi is seen by many as the father of the PlayStation, and would go on to assume the role of honorary chairman of SCEI.

## Shadow Of The Colossus October 2005

This month sees the publication of the spiritual successor to cult classic *Ico*. *Shadow Of The Colossus* wowed critics and players alike with its massive enemies, all of which function like massive, animated puzzles, which need to be explored for weaknesses. The game would later be released – along with *Ico* – in a stunningly remastered HD format on the PlayStation 3.

## Odin Sphere May 2007



2D RPG *Odin Sphere* is released. A semi-sequel to the Sega Saturn classic *Princess Crown*, Vanillaware's title remains a hand-drawn visual masterpiece and at the time of release proved that the seven-year-old PlayStation 2 was still capable of a few artistic surprises.



## Sony Bravia KDL22PX300

**December 2010**

Sony releases the Sony Bravia KDL22PX300, a 22-inch HD LCD TV with a PlayStation 2 console built into it. It costs £200 at the time and boasts four HDMI ports.




## Buzz! October 2005

*Buzz!: The Music Quiz* is released alongside its now iconic "buzzer" controller. This multiplayer classic takes the format of a quiz show hosted by quizmaster Buzz (voiced by Jason Donovan) and contains 1,000 music clips and 5,000 questions. Sequels would follow which focus on general knowledge, sport and movies.

## End Of An Era

**December 2012 - March 2013**

December 2012 saw the final batch of PlayStation 2 consoles shipped out of Sony's Japanese factories. Sales for that week in Japan total 2,078 units – more than the Xbox 360. Shortly afterwards in 2013, Sony formally discontinues the console across all regions. Over 3,800 games have been released during the console's lifetime, making it the most well-supported console in software terms as well as units sold. There is one last hurrah for the console, as its last Japanese game, *Final Fantasy XI: Adoulin No Makyou* will arrive in Japan in March of this year.

# THE UNCONVERTED

## Arcade games that never made it home






» *Devil World* has a nice variety of enemies, such as this sword carrying laval monster in the first stage.

» Your aim on the majority of stages is to find the key and take it to the level exit.

» The Western version is known as *Dark Adventure*, it adds a third player character and features a different weapon system.

» *Devil World* utilises a *Gradius* weapon system, it finds you picking up power-up orbs to select the weapon you want.

# DEVIL WORLD

■ **Developer:** Konami ■ **Year:** 1987 ■ **Genre:** Run-and-gun

■ **Sharing its title with a fairly obscure Nintendo Famicom dot munch maze game, *Devil World* is a run-and-gunner that combines aspects of *Gauntlet*, *Castlevania* and *Gradius*. One tasty sounding jam of arcade classics, it's disappointing then that it feels like a bit of a missed opportunity. Visually and atmospherically it shines, however, the gameplay doesn't quite match up to those areas, suffering from repetitive stages, slowdown whenever the screen is packed with enemies and some dubious enemy AI and hit detection.**

The player characters comprise two heroes: a crossbow-bearing reporter called Labryna and an Indiana Jones type named Condor who carries a pistol. At the start, the pair are seen opening a mysterious chest in front of the world's media, and by opening it they unwittingly release an ancient evil spirit and find themselves transported to another dimension. Their only way back is to battle through 40 plus stages of monster-infested stages, with the aim in each to locate a key and take it to the level exit. Sometimes these keys are just sat on the ground ready for retrieval but, more often found inside one of the breakable bricks and tombs.

The weapon system is where the *Gradius* reference is found, and works as you would expect: you collect power-up orbs that move a cursor over the weapon you want, all of which are listed in a table. On the whole, *Devil World* feels most comparable to *Gauntlet*, with the enemies relentless in their attacks and vast in number – though it is possible to lessen their numbers by destroying the tombs they spawn from. Making the mission harder, in addition to monsters you must also be mindful of deadly level boundaries too. And there's also the fact that *Devil World* only gives you a certain number of continues, and when that amount is reached the game is over.

One of the most interesting things about *Devil World* is that the Western version of the game differs from its Eastern cousin. Renamed *Dark Adventure*, Konami introduced a third player character (another adventurer called Zorlock), and gave the player characters' all new short-range weapons too. The *Gradius* system was also dropped for designated weapon pick-ups instead, a la *Contra*. There are moments of fun to be had, but overall Konami was capable of much better.



### CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

**GAUNTLET** 1985

With four player characters to choose from, various pick-ups to utilise and torrent of enemies to fight your way through, the money-devouring dungeon crawling classic is a pretty good alternative.

# MEGADON

■ **Developer:** Photar ■ **Year:** 1982 ■ **Genre:** Shoot-'em-up




» [Arcade] Fire off too many duff shots and very quickly the environment becomes a deadly place.

■ **Shooters come in many styles, so to find one (especially an oldie) that still manages to surprise is unusual.** Though we'll admit *Megadon* does feel a bit like Stern Electronic's *Berzerk*, it adds a lot of its own ideas. Its gameplay boils down to offering players a fun test of accuracy, quick firing and keeping alert. Steering a spaceship plonked into enemy-filled arenas with a limited number of bullets and fuel, you must clear the screen of enemies before either runs out. The enemies have the power to fire back, but more deadly is the fact that your bullets pinball wildly around the screen if they fail to hit a target, and if they come back and hit you then it's game over – firing off too many bad shots very quickly makes the environment deadly. And this is the simple genius of *Megadon*: it requires you to be fast but also accurate. Not only do you have to be conscious of how much fuel you have, but when gas reserves get to about half full, a character similar to *Berzerk*'s infamous Otto will appear on the scene and hone in on your ship.

## CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

**BERZERK** 1980




The maze shooter classic is a good alternative as it has similar gameplay to *Megadon* – though you don't have to destroy all of the enemy targets in *Berzerk* (though doing so nets you a nice bonus). An arcade classic, but one converted to a few systems.

## CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

**CYBER TROOPERS: VIRTUAL-ON** 2005




If you're looking for a solid game of duelling droids look no further than Sega's *Virtual-On* series. The series has spawned four games (three of which appeared in arcades) and all have appeared on various home consoles.

# GALACTIC WARRIORS

■ **Developer:** Konami ■ **Year:** 1985 ■ **Genre:** Beat-'em-up

■ **The most staggering thing about *Galactic Warriors* is that despite being released in 1985, and being Konami's second ever beat-'em-up, it's still better than *Rise Of The Robots*.** *Galactic Warriors* looks and feels a bit long in the tooth though, and to be honest is probably only really worth playing if you're a massive fan of fighting games starring robots and have an weird urge to see where this sub-genre most likely originated from.




» [Arcade] Here are the infamous 'booby bullets' – the best move in any fighting game… that stars robots by Konami.

You get a choice of three different robots characters. Each has a shield, which lessens the amount of health lost to attacks, and their own selection of attacks. All of them have a punch and kick attack, but one also has a sword, another has a telescopic arm like a robot Dhalsim and there's also a female robot that fires her expensive state-of-the-art breast implants at her opponents. The problem is players must toggle between which of the three attacks they want to use during the fight, and this makes for some pretty stilted combat. It's not a terrible fighter, but it's not great either.

## BEST LEFT IN THE ARCADE

# KABUKI-Z

■ **Developer:** Taito ■ **Year:** 1988 ■ **Genre:** Beat-'em-up

■ **Intended to receive a Mega Drive conversion at one stage, courtesy of Kaneko (*DJ Boy*), this tough side-scrolling hack and slash game has an *Onimusha* style theme (supernatural horror meets Japanese history) and relies on gore to draw gamers in.** Released quite a few years before *Mortal Kombat*, *Kabuki-z* has buckets of blood, fatalities and even a final boss with four arms.

The background graphics are really well detailed, and the bosses are imaginative too – our standout being the beefy muscleman on all fours that when you kill him from his back bursts two feral-looking children armed with swords. All this doesn't paper over though the poorly designed fighting game beneath.

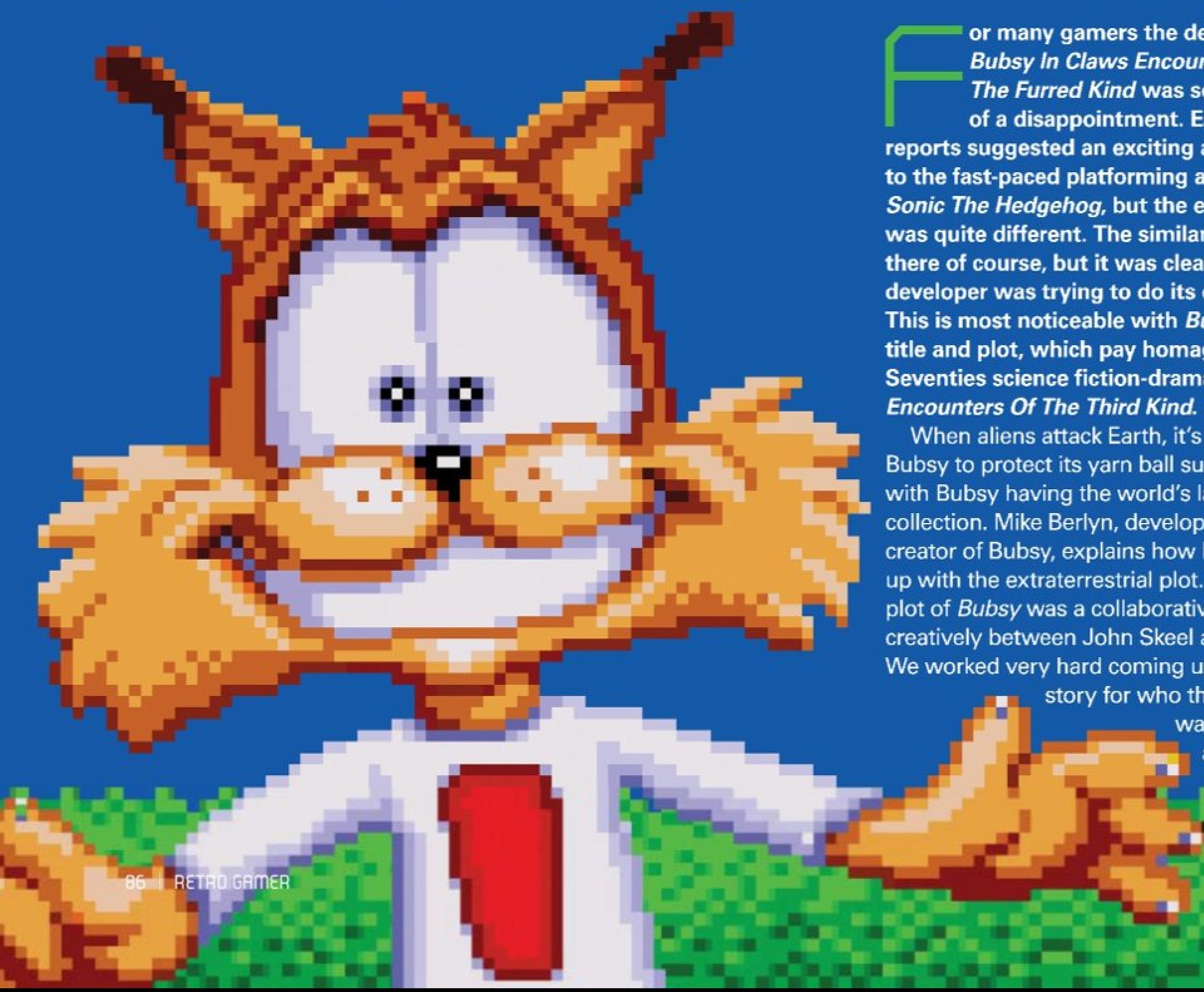
With limited moves and repeated enemies, its gameplay quickly becomes tiresome – it also doesn't help matters that the bosses are incredibly tough and when you die you're forced to start the entire stage from scratch. Its combination of being frustrating and a bit bonkers, means it's not a game we really recommend and is probably a good thing that it never left the arcades.



THE MAKING OF

# Bubsy in Claws Encounters of the Furred Kind

Bubsy the Bobcat wasn't supposed to be the next videogame mascot like Mario or Sonic, contrary to popular belief. Bubsy was created during a time when Accolade was pitted in a "David versus Goliath" legal battle against Sega. Sean Cooper unravels the yarn. . .



**For many gamers the debut of *Bubsy In Claws Encounters Of The Furred Kind* was something of a disappointment. Early reports suggested an exciting alternative to the fast-paced platforming antics of *Sonic The Hedgehog*, but the end result was quite different. The similarities are there of course, but it was clear that the developer was trying to do its own thing. This is most noticeable with *Bubsy*'s title and plot, which pay homage to the Seventies science fiction-drama, *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*.**

When aliens attack Earth, it's up to Bubsy to protect its yarn ball supply; with Bubsy having the world's largest collection. Mike Berlyn, developer and creator of Bubsy, explains how he came up with the extraterrestrial plot. "The plot of *Bubsy* was a collaborative effort creatively between John Skeel and myself. We worked very hard coming up with the story for who the character was, what his attitude was, what he was trying to do, where he had come from and what was going on. Before we knew it, we had basically decided Bubsy was a bobcat who was protecting the world's supply of yarn balls." Yarn ball kidnapping isn't something you would expect a game to resolve. So why yarn balls?

"Sonic had rings. Mario had coins. Bubsy needed something. In my infinite wisdom," chuckles Mike, "I realised that yarn balls were the perfect fit. The enemy became clear as to who they were and where they came from. They had to come from the planet Rayon and they were Woolies after the wool balls that were the yarn balls." Mike's goal was to create something typical of platform games of its era, while at the same time differentiate it from mega hits like *Sonic*.

"The goal was to pay homage to *Sonic* and not rip it off and try to do another speed game. The template for how many levels there should be, how many levels within each level, how many bosses and when the bosses should appear was pretty




» [Mega Drive] Bubsy's main nemeses are the Woolies, who are after his precious collection of yarn balls.




## IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** ACCOLADE
- » **DEVELOPER:** ACCOLADE, SOLID SOFTWARE
- » **RELEASED:** 1992 (SNES), 1993 (GENESIS)
- » **PLATFORM:** SEGA GENESIS, SNES
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORM

standard. After playing a bunch of these, I deduced that every third level there was a boss. Then you change the entire graphic set and moved on from there. We did nothing exceptional with that, we only followed what others had done before us."

*Bubsy* has often been compared to *Sonic The Hedgehog* for its similar fast-paced gameplay. Mike is no stranger to the comparison and isn't afraid to admit he's a big fan of the series. "Sonic is a very nice comparison. I'm flattered Bubsy is mentioned in the same sentence as Sonic, even if it's 'It's no *Sonic The Hedgehog*'. That's because it's not *Sonic* and it wasn't supposed to be," says Mike. "This was more like trying to bring that feeling of speed and joy and interaction through a different set of design parameters. It wasn't like we were trying to copy it. We were trying to pay tribute to it and put our own stamp on it."

One of Bubsy's special abilities is his ability to glide through the air to avoid danger. It looked cute at the time, but there was actually some dark humour behind

> It's not Sonic and it wasn't supposed to be… It wasn't like we were trying to copy it

the day-glo colours and lovable looking animation. "The flat cat thing about Bubsy gliding was kind of an inner circle joke. With Bubsy being a cat, it was about him being run over and flat and thus being able to glide," says Mike.

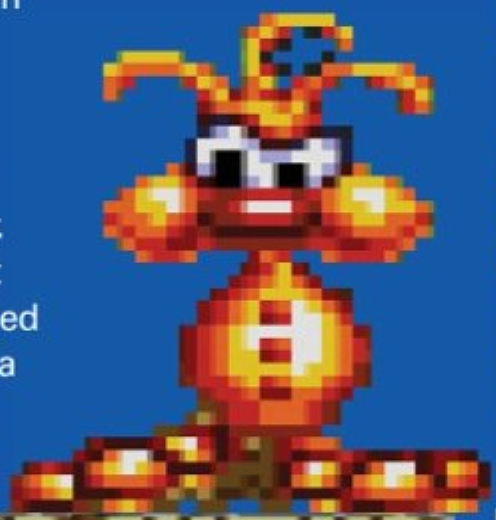
One thing that the finished product didn't show were the many challenges the team faced while working on *Bubsy*. The game ran into several development difficulties at the time, which all presented unique challenges for the team. In an era with limited resources and technology, Mike often had to come up with his own unorthodox solutions to various problems the team encountered.

"One of the major problems I had was that I didn't have any tools to switch to creating. I had no idea how *Sonic* or any other platform games were built. I took a very difficult metaphor and purchased rolls of paper and taped them together and created scrolls that were six feet, eight feet, nine feet long and drew the levels on them. I also made a window that was proportionally the size to the television screen and I placed it over the surface of the grid to actually see the game play underneath it."

Mike's quick to point out however that *Bubsy* was far from a one man show and that he'd never been able to finish the game without a dedicated team behind him. It was a Herculean team effort that got the game out the door, especially as *Bubsy* was created in an era before technology and computers were ubiquitous. According to Mike, Bubsy could have never happened without artist Ken Macklin. He wanted to make special mention of his colleague.

"Ken designed the characters for *Bubsy*. He was a comic book artist who did furry animals. We hired him to do this design. Compared to what we had, it was beautiful. It would have never happened without Ken's work." Mike also praises *Bubsy* producer John Skeel for the hype and the advertising of the first game, feeling that it's *Bubsy*'s unique team structure that made it such a successful game for Accolade.

"Typically, there are two parts in software companies. One half makes the product – they design it, they code it and do the artwork. The other half of the company does the marketing, sales and advertising. Each part is extremely important, but typically they're separate," explains Mike. "For *Bubsy* it wasn't like






» [Mega Drive] Bubsy might have had nine lives, but we'd prefer an actual energy bar. It's just too tough without one.

## BUBSY'S NAME ORIGINS

**Have you ever wondered where the name Bubsy came from? Mike explains its origins and who came up with the feisty feline's name. "Bubsy was a word that was coined by my brother-in-law to refer to the rounded Volkswagen Beetle and the female form having rounded shape. It was more an adjective than a noun. We used it to this refer to the kind of art that was in the old Max Fleischer cartoons like *Betty Boop* and *Popeye*. They all had this kind of moving, happy, bouncy, rounded look. That's really what Bubsy meant and that's where it came from."**






# THE MAKING OF



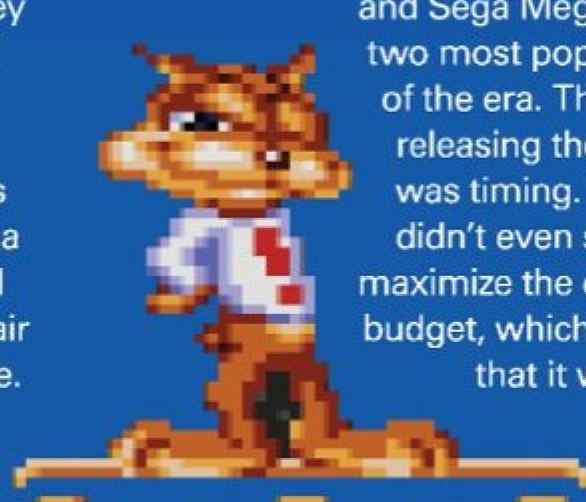




> "It got to a point where our developers were begging us not to change anything"

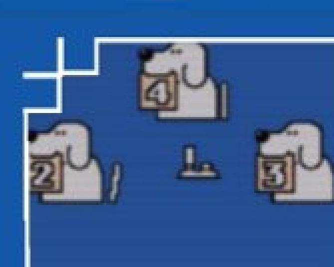
that. They worked collaboratively. It wasn't the typical marketing versus product development. John Skeel had worked at the marketing department at Electronic Arts. He would bring all of his knowledge and expertise on marketing. Everyone benefited by the key role he played. Stuff didn't happen by accident."

Before long Bubsy became the face of Accolade, but Bubsy's journey to company mascot was out of necessity. "There was a financial barrier to entry to the Sega Genesis. There was a strict licensing fee that Sega wanted everyone to pay, and Accolade thought it was unfair and monopolistic," says Mike. While many publishers simply paid the fee, Accolade fought back, but it didn't go as planned…



"We decided we could manufacture our own cartridges using a third-party supplier without having to pay the licensing fee," explains Mike. "Accolade sued Sega and won. It wasn't so much to make a mascot for the company, but to plant our feet firmly on the ground. It was a very focused and proud time for people working at Accolade. We were cheering each other on. It was for the betterment of everyone and breaking the big, mean company. Letting us create great products. We had no choice but to make Busby our mascot."

*Bubsy* was released on Super Nintendo and Sega Mega Drive (Genesis), the two most popular videogame systems of the era. The biggest issue with releasing the game for both consoles was timing. The game almost didn't even ship. "The goal was to maximize the effect of our advertising budget, which involved ensuring that it was available for most platforms," explains Mike. "The problem was that we were managing an external group that was working on the Super Nintendo version, as well as contractors we hired for the Sega Genesis version. It got to a point where our developers were begging us not to change anything. They needed to finish what they were working on. If they couldn't, it wouldn't ship. If it didn't ship, we were in serious trouble."



## DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

**FOOBLITZKY**
**SYSTEM:** APPLE II, ATARI XL/XE, DOS
**YEAR:** 1995

**ALTERED DESTINY**
**SYSTEM:** MS-DOS, AMIGA
**YEAR:** 1990

**BUBSY 3D**
**SYSTEM:** PLAYSTATION
**YEAR:** 1996



*Bubsy* did ship on time and much to Accolade's surprise it was a smashing success. It was Accolade's best-selling videogame at the time. Mike still remembers what it was like to see his game so well received. "I was thrilled, shocked, surprised and overjoyed. It was a lot of work and a lot people threw a lot of hours into it. We all hoped very much that it would be successful, but we didn't know. There's no way of knowing. When it was successful we were thrilled."

*Bubsy*'s release was heavily hyped and marketed. The game sold very well and received fairly decent reviews from the media and gamers, but that wasn't to say it was perfect, with many concerned about the game's overall difficulty level and occasionally twitchy controls. "I thought the reviews were very fair. It wasn't a perfect product and people seemed to like it and reviewed it well," says Mike, who goes on to tell us about the aspects of the gameplay that he wasn't happy with.

"There were two major issues: the aggressive nature of the enemies and Bubsy being able to only take one hit," he




» [Mega Drive] Bubsy is a fast platformer in the style of Sonic The Hedgehog, with the ability to even glide his way through levels.




» [Mega Drive] Players receive bonus points for yarn balls collected in each level.




continues. "The enemies in *Bubsy* were like any other enemy in a platform game, but they were aggressive and made it way too difficult to get through and enjoy. It was possible to get through it and work very hard, but if I had purchased the game I would have been unhappy. The goal wasn't to make the world's hardest game. It was to make a fun game people would enjoy that was worth their money."

*Bubsy* was a big success for Accolade, but it could have been bigger. There was supposed to be a *Bubsy* cartoon series that never saw the light of day beyond a one-off pilot episode that never got picked up. "The reason there was a *Bubsy* cartoon was directly the result of John Skeel. Taco Bell sponsored it. It was supposed to come out on Thanksgiving, but it got bumped for something, nobody could find it and it showed and that was it. It could have broken us through to the next level, but it never happened."

Looking back, Mike has fond memories of his time developing *Bubsy*. He says he's proud of all that his team at Accolade accomplished. "I think *Bubsy*'s legacy is really the characters, the story and the environment. *Sonic* didn't have much going for it except its massively beautiful gameplay. *Mario* kind of lost its charm about going to save the princess; it had gotten very watered down. *Bubsy*'s characters are what live on. The reason why people are so interested in *Bubsy* is because of Bubsy. Not because of me, or because it was a great game or a bad game, it was because of the character. We put a lot of effort into making Bubsy as three dimensional as we could make a two dimensional character."

## MORE ANTHROPOMORPHISM



### AWESOME POSSUM

**GAMES:** Awesome Possum… Kicks Dr. Machino's Butt **(MEGA DRIVE/GENESIS, 1993)**

Awesome Possum only appeared in one mediocre game where players had to stop the evil Dr. Machino from polluting the environment. At the end of levels players answered questions an environment pop quiz for bonus points, the game's difficulty level was high for all the wrong reasons – cheap enemies and clunky controls.




### MR. NUTZ

GAMES: Mr. Nutz **(SUPER NES, MEGA DRIVE/GENESIS, 1994)**

Mr. Nutz is a nut-throwing squirrel who must travel through six levels to stop Mr. Blizzard, a malicious yeti with ambitions to make the world freeze. The visuals are gorgeous but the gameplay can be tedious. Ocean clearly saw potential in its hero though, as *Nutty* games were later released on Game Boy and Game Boy Color.



### AERO THE ACRO-BAT

**GAMES:** The Acro-Bat **(SUPER NES, MEGA DRIVE/GENESIS 1993)**

Trying to cash in on the popularity of *Sonic*, Aero the Acro-Bat (sigh…) defends his circus from a disgruntled former clown named Edgar Ektor. The game was pretty well received (with Aero even scooping best New Character of 1993 by EGM) and even received a sequel – both games are also available on Virtual Console.



### TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER

**GAMES:** Ty The Tasmanian Tiger **(PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, GAMECUBE, 2002)**

Help Ty gather 72 thundereggs (which are definitely a thing) and power the mysterious talisman machine in this solid platform game. Although Ty the Tasmanian Tiger didn't gain the same level of fame Crash Bandicoot achieved, he did do pretty well for himself. The first game sold over one million copies and spawned two sequels.




### GEX

**GAMES:** Gex **(PLAYSTATION, SEGA SATURN, 1995)**

Gex is a gecko with attitude! He's a "couch lizard" who loves TV, while his arch nemesis Rez is determined to overthrow the world of television. Although Gex sold over 15 million copies, he wasn't the face of Sony like Crash Bandicoot. The wisecracks and pop culture references did tend to get old after a while.

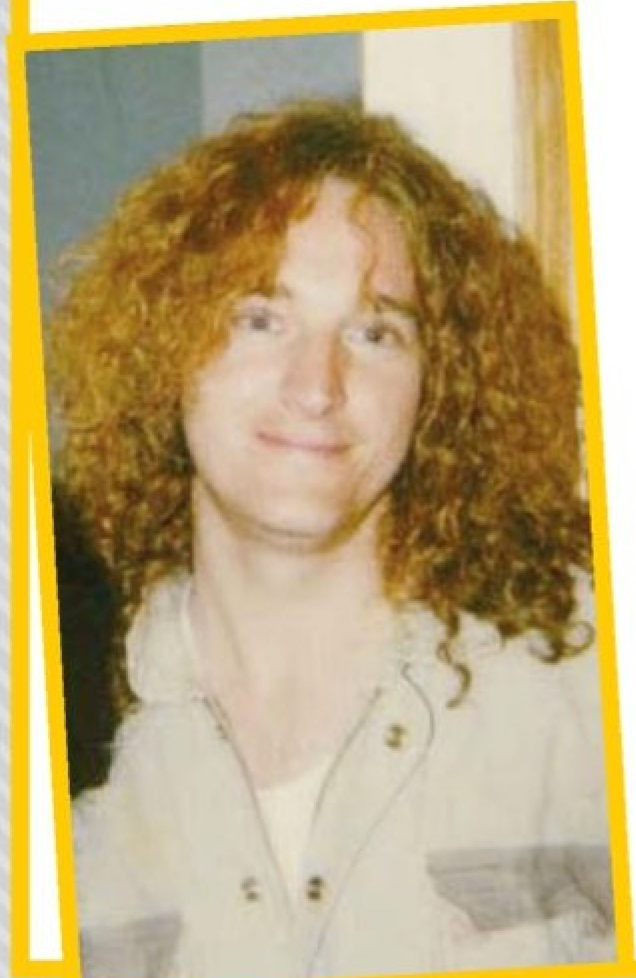


# In the chair with...

# MARK TURMELL

**From sneaky Apple II shooters to huge arcade hits, Mark Turmell has created an envious array of best-selling titles and hasn't been afraid to enjoy the rewards of success. He tells Paul Drury about the girls, the glamour and three decades of making games**

"I WANTED TO be Mark Turmell," sang Dan Bryk on his debut album and it's not hard to see why. Mark's very first Apple II game, *Sneakers*, was a big hit for Sirius Software and by the tender age of 17, he had moved to California, was coding VCS games and driving a Porsche. Titles such as *Fast Eddie* and *Turmoil* caught the eye of the mighty Activision and he joined as it began developing for home computers. At the end of the Eighties, he moved into the arcade business at Midway and had colossal success with *Smash TV* and the all-conquering *NBA Jam* series. Mark currently works for casual gaming kings Zynga, developing titles for mobile devices



**You have a reputation for hiding secrets in the games you've made, like the heads of US Presidents in *NBA Jam*. Are you a secretive person?**
Definitely when it comes to games! Every game I've worked on I've tried to hide something, whether it's secret rooms or characters. I've even hidden games within other games. You think you know everything about a game and then boom, someone tells you something you didn't know about. That's part of the charm.

**So when did you first encounter the charms of computer games?**
It was 1976 and a friend of mine's father was a college professor. He brought home a little terminal that you could hook up to a telephone through a modem and access the mainframe at his university. It had paper output and there was a football which would type across the paper, "1st and 10 at the 20" and then it would print "A – long bomb, B – run up the middle…" and so on. You'd make a choice then it'd think for a little while and come back with "8 yards complete, 2nd and 2".

I was hooked! I was in the 8th grade and that game had such an impact on me I started taking computer classes at the local college. By the time I was 15, I had left high school and I was doing computer science at the college.

**So you left school early to focus on computer programming?**
Yeah, you should do four years in high school until you're eighteen but I only did two and went to college. I didn't even have a driving licence! Mom would drive me there.

**You must have had supportive parents to get into computers in this way.**
They got me an Apple II computer, I went into the basement and started plugging away with the sole intention of making a game and making money. They were curious as to what it was… my vision. My first game, *Sneakers*, came out when I was fifteen and I was getting royalty cheques through the door for $10,000 every month. I look back now and think, 'Wow, my parents must've been freaking out!' I didn't know that was an astronomical amount back then. They just said, 'We'll put this money into a bank account for you.'

**Did having that kind of money as a teenager affect you?**
Well, I did buy a Porsche when I was seventeen years old.

**Nice. We presume *Sneakers* was inspired by the arcade games of the day?**
Absolutely. *GORF* was out and lots of other space games. I wrote it completely in my basement, put my name on it and sent it Federal Express to Sirius Software. It was the clear leader in publishing Apple games. I got a call the next day saying, 'We got your package!' They sent me a contract and I was up and running.

**Did you move to California to join Sirius at this point?**
Not yet. I moved up to university and started on another Apple II game called *Beer Run*. It was a 'climb the building' style game, with ladders, guys chasing you and six-packs of beer left on the ledges for you to



“All the fundamental lessons I’ve learned over thirty years in the videogame business apply 100 per cent today”

## SELECTED TIMELINE

**Sneakers (Apple II)** 1980
**Beer Run (Apple II)** 1981
**Free Fall (Apple II)** 1982
**Fast Eddie (Atari 2600)** 1982
**Turmoil (Atari 2600)** 1982
**Gas Hog (Atari 2600)** 1983
**Toy Bizarre (Commodore 64)** 1984
**Fast Tracks (Commodore 64)** 1986
**Smash TV (Arcade)** 1990
**Total Carnage (Arcade)** 1991
**NBA Jam (Arcade)** 1993
**WWF Wrestlemania (Arcade)** 1995
**NBA Hang Time (Arcade)** 1996
**NFL Blitz (Arcade)** 1998
**NBA Showtime (Arcade)** 1999
**Arctic Thunder (Arcade)** 2001
**MLB Slugfest (Multiformat)** 2002
**Midway Arcade Treasures 2 (Multiformat)** 2004
**NBA Ballers (Multiformat)** 2006
**TNA iMpact! (Multiformat)** 2008
**Bubble Safari (iOS)** 2012



» Bret 'The Hitman' Hart with Mark 'The Hair' Turmell, flanked by graphic artists Josh Tsui (left) and Sal Divita.

collect. Sirius had some deal with a beer company. It was an early example of advertising in a game! I started on a third game called *Free Fall*, which was a bit like *Frogger* except you were hanging on a girder and dropping down the screen, but then Sirius told me it was going to start doing Atari VCS cartridge game. That prompted me to drop out of university and move to California.

**That must have been quite daunting for a teenager?**
I was super shy and super geeky. I was a virgin till my 21st birthday! For me to move out there was very scary but what made it okay was Sirius had hired a few of these young kids to come out and make games. Back then, there was all this hoopla about 'computer whizzkids'. I was featured in *People* magazine about this whizzkid thing and I got all these phone calls from other magazines but when I told them I was nineteen they said, 'Oh you're kind of past it now.' I felt I was old and my career was almost over! It took me a few years before I could see these fifteen year olds were burning out and didn't have the experience and patience to follow up with more games. It was only then I got over the trauma of my extreme age…

**You were certainly prolific and produced two VCS games in 1982, *Fast Eddie* and *Turmoil*.**
They were crazy times. I started *Fast Eddie* in March and it was done and being shown at the CES in Chicago in June. By then I'd already started on *Turmoil*. The speed you could make games… I mean, there was only 4K of memory and 128 bytes of RAM!

**Isn't the VCS notoriously difficult to program for?**
The toughest thing was what I was used to, the Apple II, had memory you could store to. The first question I had as I rolled up my sleeves on my first day in California was, 'Where's the screen memory? How do I turn an object on on-screen?' They told me there wasn't any. I'd have to count the cycles as the raster writes to the TV screen. I was like, 'Whoooah, wait a minute…' Man, it was a brave new world for me but when you're dedicated and you want to make a game, you work it out. And it was a blast. The VCS was a great little platform to do cool things on.

**Did you enjoy handling every aspect of a game?**
Absolutely. I've remained a control freak to this day!

> "Sneakers came out when I was fifteen and I was getting royalty cheques through the door for $10,000 every month"




» [Apple II] *Beer Run* was written before Mark was legally allowed to drink alcohol.




**Your second VCS game was called *Turmoil*. Is that a play on your surname?**
Yes! I had it on the licence plate of my Porsche too! I was living my life on the edge during those years, too many girlfriends and stuff, so my life always felt in turmoil. The game was so fast, it was a kind of sensory overload. It was the game that caught the attention of David Crane. Activision called me up and said 'We want you to make games for us.'

**We understand it wasn't the only offer you got around this time. Didn't Microsoft approach you?**
I got an invite to Steve Wozniak's [co-founder of Apple] wedding. I didn't know why I was invited but I wasn't going to turn it down! Turns out he was trying to pay tribute to the Apple community. When I got there, he told me when he was recovering in hospital from a flying accident *Sneakers* had been his favourite game.

Bill Gates [founder of Microsoft] came up to me at that party, introduced himself, and said 'Mark Turmell, I love your games!' He'd been writing games too – before *Microsoft Flight Simulator* he'd done a decathlon game and he was really into games! He told me he'd started this small company up in Seattle, with about a dozen employees, and invited me to join him out there. I asked what they were doing and he talked about Tiny BASIC.

It didn't make sense to me that he was trying to make an easier programming language. By that stage I had graduated to doing everything in assembly because of the improved performance. I told him I was working on these VCS games and that was the future! I turned him down.

**So you could've been Microsoft's 13th employee and a multi-millionaire by now?**
Well, I was so into games, maybe I would've had an impact on Microsoft, pushing it towards VCS development and the videogame world… this was before the crash, so in hindsight, I think my influence could only have been negative. Microsoft may never have achieved its success if I had been involved!

IN THE CHAIR:




**You could have changed the history of computers!** Every time I told the story during the Eighties, it just kept getting worse. All the employees were becoming millionaires and I thought what a mistake I'd made. Then my wife would say, 'Yes, but Mark, you wouldn't have met me.' And I would be like, 'Oh right, yeah.' She's my ex-wife now.

**You joined Activision in 1983. What was the atmosphere like there?**
Awesome! There was a guy called Jim Levy who was a real visionary and David Crane and Steve Cartwright were just coming up with good ideas all the time. But just like the industry today, things were changing. They were deciding whether they should be doing disk-based games not cartridges. There was upheaval in the market and I came right in the middle of that.




**Is that why your first game for Activision, *Toy Bizarre,* was released for home computers?**
*Toy Bizarre* was their first disk-based game. You could get it on cartridge or disk for the C64. It was a departure for Activision as they moved onto new platforms, away from cartridge-based systems.

**You continued producing games for home computers and in 1986 you wrote *Fast Tracks: The Computer Slot Car Construction Set,* which gave players the tools to design their own circuits.**
That's another game I'm really proud of. The interface let you grab parts and scroll around the track, all with a joystick and one button, to layout and then race on your own tracks. The game I'm working on now [also] has user-generated content at its core.

**Another example of your prescient thinking was your involvement with the NEMO project, which is best remembered for spawning the infamous game *Night Trap.***
Rob Fulop, David Crane and I, we were the videogame guys on that

# FIVE TO PLAY

Fast-paced gameplay is a trademark of Mark's games. Here are five of our favorites that you simple must seek out

## SMASH TV




AS A HUGE *Robotron* fan and an accomplished player of Eugene Jarvis and Larry De Mar's superlative shooter, Mark was delighted to revive the dual-joystick set up for his first game for Midway. *Smash TV* manages to capture the claustrophobic atmosphere and relentless challenge of its inspiration but adds power-ups, multiple routes and a marvellous co-operative mode. A compelling arcade cabinet, it spawned some fine home conversions, including creditable efforts for the C64 and Spectrum, proving there was still life in the 8-bits in the early Nineties. While we particularly enjoyed the mindless carnage caused by the protective circle of ninja blades, we always thought the game was a subtle satire on rampant consumerism. Was Mark trying to get players to think as well as blast? "Not really", he laughs. "We were trying to put some tongue-in-cheek humour in there. It was set in the future and we were trying to show the way game shows were heading." If the next series of *Total Wipeout* adds blades to the Terror-Go-Round, you'll know it's because the producers grew up playing this.

## NBA JAM



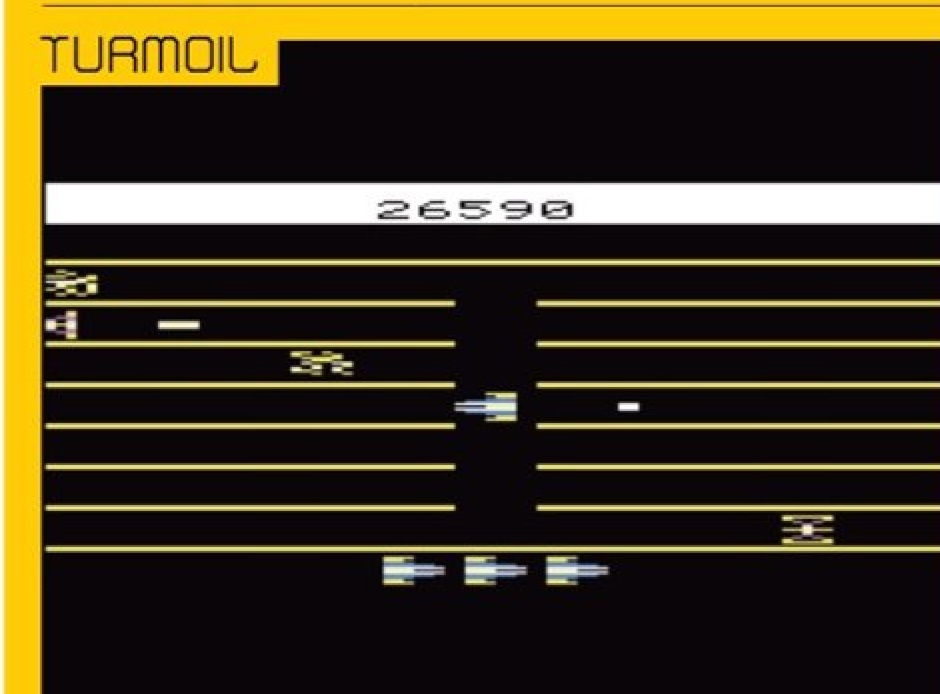

NOT ONLY MARK'S biggest money-spinner but one of the highest earning arcade machines of all-time, *NBA Jam*'s success was built around a simple premise: take a hugely popular sport, forget realism and just focus on the fun bits. And it really, really worked. Two-on-two basketball had been done before but never with such a tasty mix of fast footwork, sharp passing and gravity-defying dunks. Instantly accessible yet with subtle tactical nuances, the urge to put in another coin to play the next quarter was irresistible, especially when you and your teammate were dominating the court in a crowded arcade. Crammed full of secrets, including the digitised heads of the development team and a whole tank battle game, look out for a full Making Of *NBA Jam* in a future issue of **Retro Gamer**. Boomshakalaka!

## SNEAKERS




WRITTEN WHEN HE was just fifteen, Mark's first published title appeared on the Apple II and became a favourite of the machine's designer, Steve Wozniak. The eight attack waves feature dive-bombing Fangs, sinister Cyclops, an asteroid field to negotiate and, in a nod to both *Star Wars* and the location of the computer classes he was taking at the time, the H-Wings. It reminds us of Rob Fulop's *Demon Attack*, in that it took the basic 'left-right-shoot' format laid down by innumerable late Seventies and early eighties coin-ops and translated it for the home market with real aplomb, adding a distinct personality of its own. The titular Sneakers, who appear in the opening level, were relatively benign, smiling little creatures. They also made a return in Mark's first VCS game, *Fast Eddie*.

## TURMOIL




THIS FRENETIC BLASTER took its title not only from his last name, but also the tumultuous lifestyle Mark enjoyed after his move to California in 1982, and aptly reflects the kind of chaotic fun he was clearly having. It bursts with colour, boasts some impressive animation and at higher levels becomes a blur of bullets and baddies. You have to keep moving and shooting or it's game over pretty quickly! Though it was primarily designed to push the limited VCS hardware – keeping enemies funnelled in horizontal tunnels allowed some primitive sprite multiplexing to increase the alien count on screen – a version did appear on our beloved VIC-20. "That one was wildly fun," enthuses Mark. "Another guy came in who was responsible for porting my VCS games to the VIC but I did work with him to add some bells and whistles."

## TOY BIZARRE




MARK'S FIRST GAME for Activision also saw his return to coding for home computers after his VCS days. Whilst it obviously owes a debt to the original *Mario Brothers* arcade game, *Toy Bizarre* has its own distinct character, as you hop from platform to platform, bursting balloons, retrieving rogue toys and avoiding the evil clockwork Hilda. "I'm really proud of it," says Mark when we asked him about the rather obscure Commodore 64 game. "The great thing about the game is it gets fast. Lightening fast. As you get on to higher levels, it has this mode so once you've cleared the level, you have a few seconds to pop any remaining balloons. It became a really challenging play mechanic and it's a lot of fun." Although *Toy Bizarre* is one of Mark's lesser known games, it's certainly worth playing with.

## NUMBER CRUNCHING

**3:** Number of baskets a player has to score in a row in NBA Jam to trigger the 'on fire' mode

**7:** Number of players per side in the original NFL Blitz

**8:** Number of alien attack waves in Mark's first game, Sneakers

**220:** Number of keys required to enter the Pleasure Domes in Total Carnage

**1999:** The year in which Smash TV's ultra-violent gameshow is apparently set

**10,000:** Points required to earn each extra life in Toy Bizarre. You'll need them

**40,000:** Mark's starting salary in dollars on joining Sirius Software, aged seventeen




» Mark's first game for Zynga was *Bubble Safari*, given the billboard treatment here.

project. When I joined, it was driven by Hollywood stuff, like a Jane Fonda workout video, where the video could branch to different tracks. I was really enamoured with the potential of the technology and became the most vocal supporter of this new approach to making games. I wanted to get more of the magic of traditional videogames into that package. I think we did a pretty decent job, not just with *Night Trap* that Rob really spearheaded, but also on *Sewer Shark* that eventually came out the with Mega CD. It was a sad day when the funding ran out for that.

**What did you think of all the heated controversy surrounding *Night Trap*, with the game being cited in Senate hearings as 'sick and shameful'?**
When that all happened in the early Nineties, I'd left Hasbro and gone to Midway. My first games there were *Smash TV* and *Mortal Kombat* which had all the violence and they got lumped in with *Night Trap* and the whole publicity horror show. I had my fingers in all those pieces of it!

**Talking of horror, is this the right time to discuss your old hair style? That was quite a mane…**
[laughs] I went a little bit Hollywood there. Hasbro was involved with movie licences and I was working on *Police Academy 4.5*, an interactive movie for the NEMO project. I got a taste of how Hollywood worked, being on these movie sets. Remember, I'd only started having girlfriends for a handful of years. That's the time I really grew up – my formative years. I kind of went for this Robert Plant look.



**We think you look more like Aerosmith.**
I met Aerosmith when they came in to Bally Midway [to be digitised for the arcade game *Revolution X*]. They asked for alcohol and pornography before they'd get started. And when The Undertaker came in to shoot his scenes for *WWF Wrestlemania*, he refused to work unless he had a bottle of Jack Daniels next to him.

**Was being a high profile videogame programmer like being a rock star at all?**
It really was! At Activision, if we were all heading to a Consumer Electronic Show, they wouldn't even let us fly on the same plane just in case it crashed! It was crazy but then our games were selling a couple of million cartridges at $50 a time, so programmers became very valuable. Everybody there was making hundreds of thousands of dollars and we were treated like stars. I even got featured in *Seventeen* magazine as Bachelor of the Month! [laughs] I started getting all these letters from girls after that. It definitely strokes your ego.

**So it was all fast cars and living the high life?**
Absolutely! I went from this shy kid who couldn't hold a girl's hand to this wild man, driving fast cars and getting with actresses on movie sets. I did date Janet Jones [*Playboy* cover girl, March '87] but she ditched me and married Wayne Gretsky. A guy called Dan Bryk wrote a song called *Mark Turmell 2.0* because he grew up playing my games and reading these articles. He had this vision of the cars, the women, the drugs… this was the life he wanted [laughs].

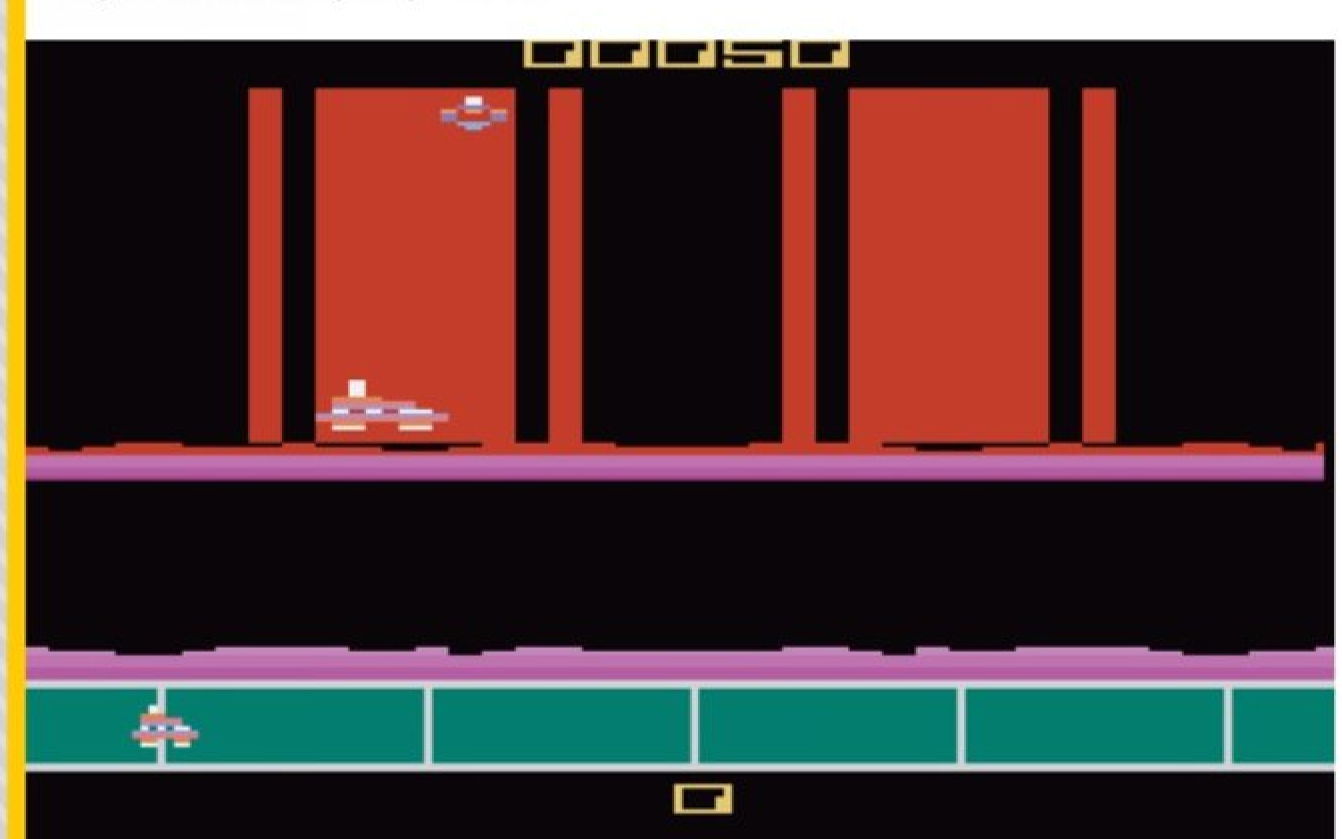
**When the NEMO project was cancelled, you left Hasbro and joined Midway, where you began work on *Smash TV*.**
I'd always been a fan of arcade games, especially the games of Eugene Jarvis, so I came out to Chicago, told the guys there *Robotron* was my favourite game of all time and my dream was to revive the dual joystick controls that he had pioneered.

**Does updating a game that you love pose any particular difficulties or challenges?**
There were no cons in my mind. It wasn't really a sequel, I was just trying to leverage the play mechanic. It only took me a week or so of being there to get the mechanic of running and shooting in 360 degrees. That is so beautiful, the game was fun right from the get go. I hired John Tobias, a young artist just out of high school, who was pegging walls down by the subway. He created the art for the characters and went on to do the *Mortal Kombat* series. A great artist. He's still my partner now on my current project. We put the band back together!

**Please tell us if it was ever possible to access the elusive Pleasure Domes.**
That's a Turmell scam right there! It goes back to your first question about secrets… in *Smash TV* there were keys you could pick up as you played through and I put in an ending that said, 'You are a great *Smash TV* player but you didn't pick up enough keys to enter the Pleasure Domes'.

We had people going back and playing the game over and over trying to get enough keys but lo and behold, there were no Pleasure Domes! I got into some trouble because operators started calling us saying they had angry players in their arcades. By this time, *Total Carnage* was well under way so I added some Pleasure Domes to the end of that game. [NB: Later revisions of the *Smash TV* ROM had Pleasure Domes added to the game.]

» [VCS] Mark's last game for Sirius was *Gas Hog*, a *Moon Patrol* homage on Spectravision.



**Was Total Carnage a sequel of sorts to *Smash TV* then?**
We felt we could've done more with *Smash TV*. We had the Gulf War and Saddam Hussein and all the ridiculous things on the news with us bombing baby milk factories and stuff. We wanted to take the play mechanic but add scrolling and this war theme. A game called *MERCS* had come out in the arcade and done really well so we thought it was a viable genre, so we spent the ten months after *Smash TV* working on it.



Mark on the *NFL Blitz* assembly line.

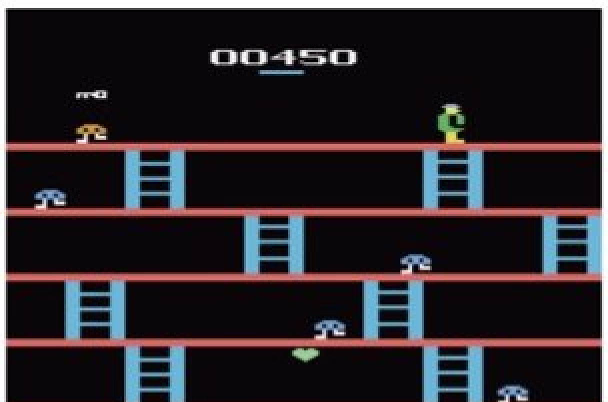
"Bill Gates offered me a job at Microsoft in 1982 but I turned him down. I told him I was working on these VCS games and that was the future!"

***Mortal Kombat* was produced by Midway around this time. Did you have any input on that game?**
A little. Back in 1992, digitised graphics were the new high-tech thing, so we were spearheading techniques to videotape live action and use it in videogames. John [Tobias] was doing it for *Mortal Kombat*, I was using it for *NBA Jam* and we shared some of the tools.

**Was *NBA Jam* a dream project?**
Oh yeah. I've always been a huge fan of the *NBA*. When I started out making games, making money on the VCS, my dream was to own an *NBA* franchise. Back in the early Eighties, they weren't that expensive! This was my first opportunity to make a sports game and the gameplay we created allowed it to make more money than any other arcade game. Locations were making over $2400 a week in the cashbox… they couldn't empty them fast enough!

**It certainly was a huge hit, but we just wondered if the success meant you felt rather trapped into churning out sequels and updates?**
Yeah, it definitely got old. I think *NBA Hangtime* actually had superior gameplay and better tuning but at that point, the mechanic was getting stale. It wasn't until my next project after that, my first 3D project, *NFL Blitz*, when I'd moved from assembly language to C++, that all the lessons I'd learned over the years came back to the surface. That's my favourite game of the ones I've developed.

**Since the Nineties, you've done videogame versions of baseball, ice hockey, and basketball. Do you ever feel pigeonholed as the 'sports game guy'?**
No, I never felt that. I was a real sports fan. I became creative director for EA Sports and that was a beautiful, natural fit for me. I loved all the competitive, head to head gameplay and refining the *NBA Jam* and *Blitz* properties. I could do that for a long time…



[VCS] The Sneakers themselves made a crafty comeback in Mark's first VCS game, *Fast Eddie*.

**So why did you leave EA to join Zynga and start making casual games for mobile devices?**
I recognised the tidal wave of change in the videogame business. It's not just the shift away from consoles to mobile devices and tablets, but also to the 'free to play' model. When you think about the future of games, you don't think about the $50 dollar product or even the $10 product. We're pretty much at the point where no-one thinks about the 99 cent product. Everything is freeplay and micro-transactions. That's going back to the arcade days, when it cost a quarter to play and you had to hook players enough to put in that second quarter. A couple of years ago, I woke up and recognised the change was happening and I wanted to be a part of it. EA is really good at recognising that too but it takes a long time for a big company to shift gears. Zynga had that way of thinking from day one and no one is better positioned at this moment to ride that wave.


[Arcade] *Total Carnage* transposed the violence of *Smash TV* to the violence of American Imperialism.

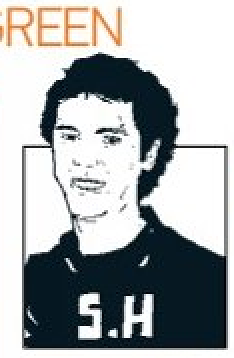
**Your first game for Zynga was *Bubble Safari*, which you've recently updated with *Bubble Safari Ocean*. Despite being in the business for three decades, isn't this your first puzzle game?**
It is! But one of my top ten games of all time is *Bust-A-Move*. There's something magical about matching colours and looking for different combinations. I've got a lot of fresh ideas too. Imagine going head to head, say matching cards to make the best poker hand, or a military theme, or a co-op theme where you're playing on the same board. There's a lot of room for innovation!

**Does it feel like the old days, making small, accessible games like you did for the Apple II and VCS?**
I've come completely full circle. The focus on gameplay, the micro-transactions of the arcade business, holding players hands in the mass market, making them feel good and powering them up… it's amazingly similar. All those fundamental things I've learned over the years apply 100 per cent today. The business can change so much but the one thing that stays the same are those mechanics, those lessons we learned thirty years ago.

# Kirby's Dream Course

PINK ON GREEN

» RETROREVIVAL




» SUPER NINTENDO
» HAL LABORATORY
» 1994

**I've always enjoyed videogame golf more than the real thing. The problem with golf is that you need to be of a reasonable standard to get the most out of it. It can be incredibly unforgiving, take a lot of time to master the basics and if you're a novice then unless you enjoy kempt grass and a bit of mudlarking then prepare for a frustrating few hours.**

Alternatively, of course, you could just play videogame golf, which allows you to sit back in a comfy chair and enjoy the objective of the sport (to get a small ball to fall down a hole in as few moves as possible) with the computer/console worrying about all the technique and stance correctness that has to be considered.

One of the better quirkier golf videogames can be found tucked away within the *Kirby* series. Released exclusively for the Super NES (though later made available on VC), the aim of *Kirby's Dream Course* is very simple. Kirby plays the role of the golf ball, and you must destroy the enemies by smashing him into them. You do this until just one enemy remains and, from fear of seeing a similar fate, scarpers – burrowing into the ground and leaving a nice hole for Kirby to fall into.

You can either chip Kirby into the air or putt him along the ground, and once you've selected the shot type and lined up the aiming line, you have the option to select some spin and the power of the shot. Dotted around the courses are various enemies, obstacles and floor pads – ranging from warp pads to switches that drain away pools of water. You have an allotted number of tries with which to finish a course, though you earn extra tries by hitting enemies and dropping Kirby into the holes.

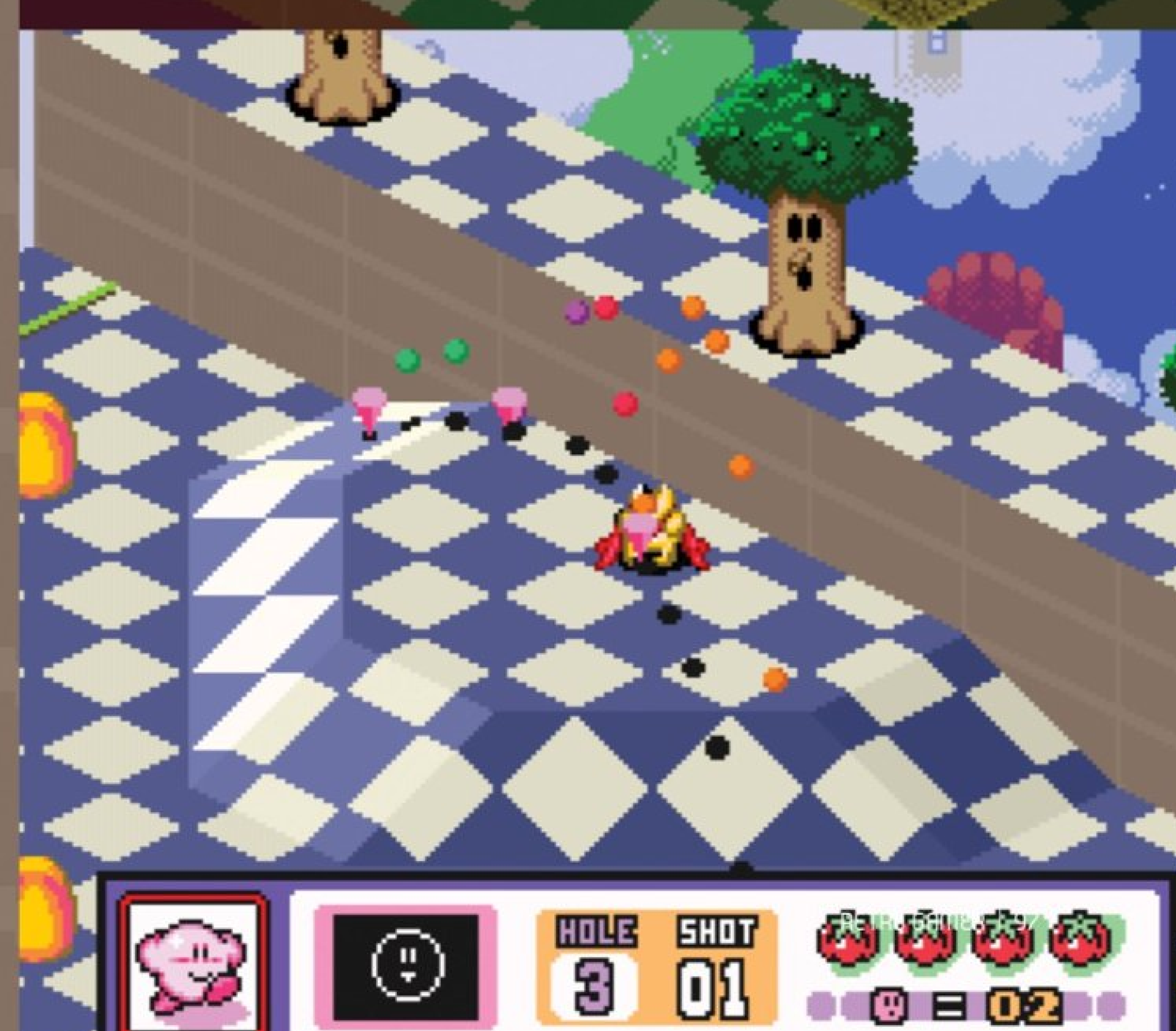
Of course, no *Kirby* game would be complete without the pink gannet gaining different abilities, and these come in form of a variety of objects, including a parasol to slow the him down, a wheel power-up that speeds him up and a spark power that lets him attack enemies. While the cheery tunes and cutesy visuals of *Dream Course* probably won't appeal to many hardcore golfers out there, it sure beats walking home with bunker sand in your shoes.




= 02


HOLE
2
SHOT
01
= 03


HOLE
IN
ONE


HOLE
3
SHOT
01
= 02

# RETRORATED



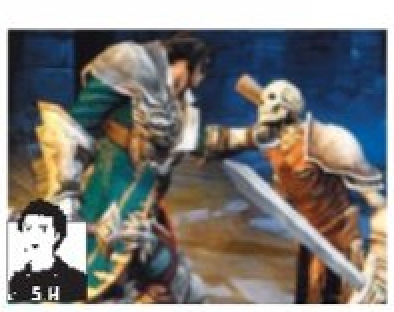


>> 17 years after her groundbreaking debut, Lara Croft returns in a brand new reboot. We also examine the latest Castlevania game and build our own virtual arcade. All in all it has been a pretty good month for classic franchises

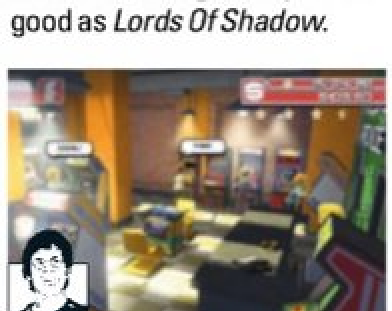
## ✱ PICKS OF THE MONTH



**DARRAN**
**Tomb Raider**
It takes lots of elements from the *Uncharted* series, but still feels like *Tomb Raider.*



**STUART**
**Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow – Mirror Of Fate**
It's a good addition to the franchise, though not quite as good as *Lords Of Shadow*.



**DAVID**
**Arcadecraft**
It gets too easy too quickly, but in the meantime you'll have great fun.

# Tomb Raider

## LARA CROFT AS YOU'VE NEVER SEEN HER BEFORE

**INFORMATION**

- **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBOX 360
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PS3, PC
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £39.99
- **PUBLISHER:** SQUARE ENIX
- **DEVELOPER:** CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
- **PLAYERS:** 1 (2-8 ONLINE)



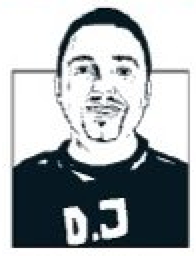
**✱ WHY NOT TRY**

▼ SOMETHING OLD
**PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME (PS2)**



▼ SOMETHING NEW
**UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES (PS3)**



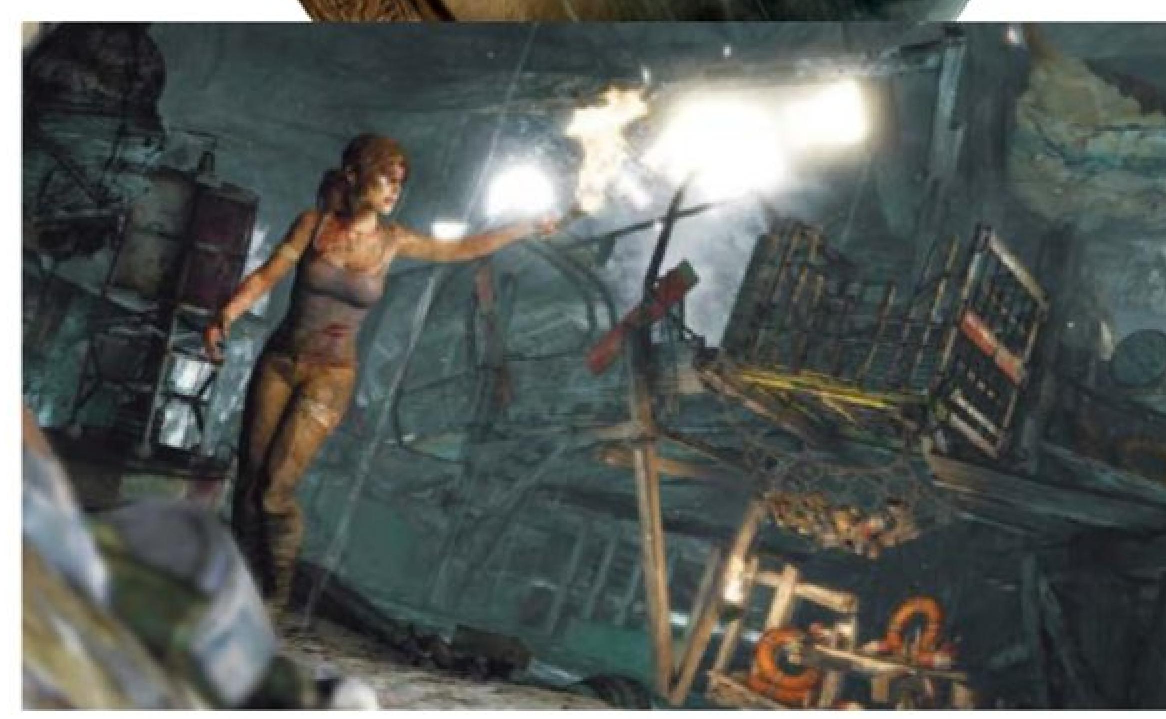


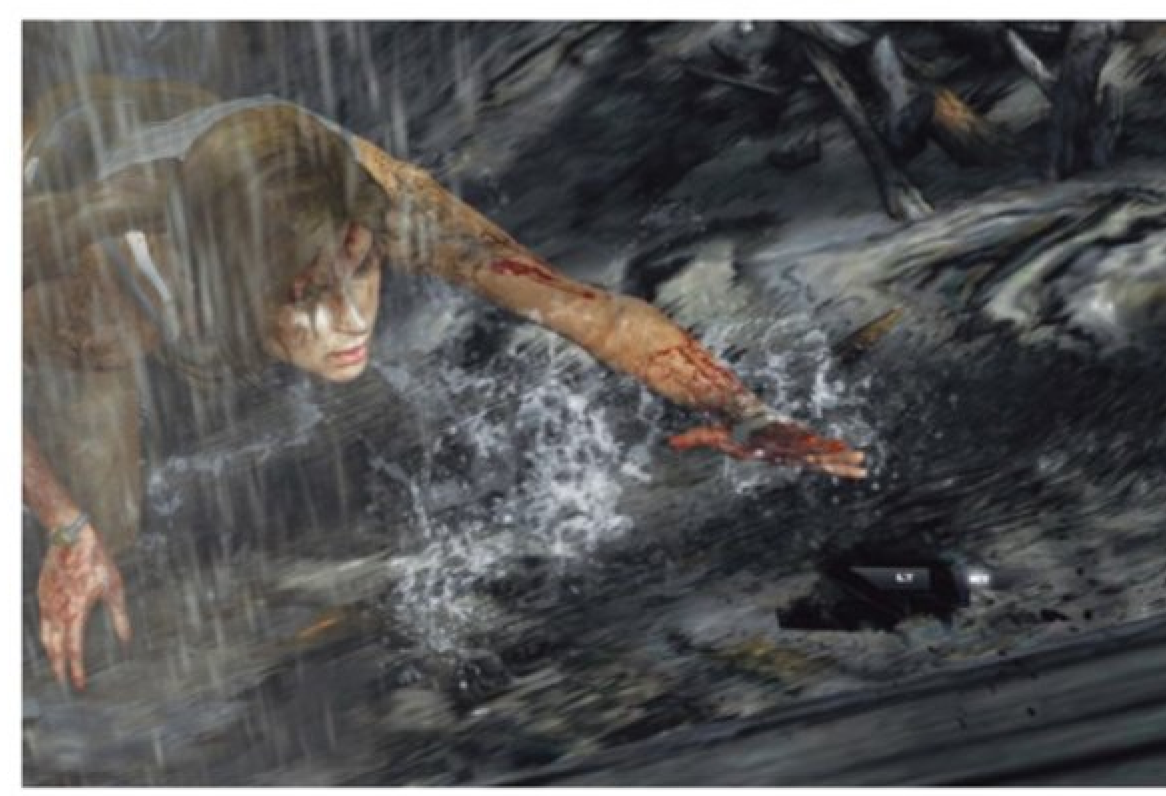
**Ever since Crystal Dynamics was given access to the *Tomb Raider* franchise we've been eager to see what direction it would take the series in. After a number of enjoyable, but shall we say 'safe' adventures the studio has finally made the game it has always wanted to make. And it's an *Uncharted* clone...**

But don't despair, *Uncharted* is one of the best third-person action games of recent years, meaning the core building blocks of Crystal Dynamics' new game are completely sound. What's impressive here, is that while Crystal Dynamics' new adventure liberally borrows from a number of popular triple-A franchises, it still feels like a *Tomb Raider* game. This is mainly due to the writing talents of Rhianna Pratchett, who does a great job of fleshing out Lara and grounding her, so you genuinely care about the upper class lass as she goes through her dangerous adventure. It's slightly undone by the fact that videogame conventions means she goes from frightened, inexperienced waif to untouchable Rambo-like superhero a little too easily, but there's no denying that the supernatural tinged story is one of *Tomb Raider*'s greatest strengths and Pratchett takes it far further than any past game in the series.

One area where *Tomb Raider* does struggle though is in the actual survival stakes that Crystal Dynamics has been so proudly trumpeting about during the game's production. Things start off promisingly with Lara searching for shelter from the elements and hunting a deer for food, but you soon realise that you never have to do either again, as they never make any impact on Lara's actual status. It's a real pity because you're initially given an impression that this really is a brand new direction for the *Tomb Raider* series, but these strong ideas are watered down into simple game mechanics instead. Seeking out camp fires serve as clever little save points, while killing animals earns you nothing but XP (you can also gain experience for killing the many humans that frequent the island).

The same can be said for the much-touted salvaging of weapons that features in *Tomb Raider.* Scrabbling around the island to find and create makeshift weapons





» [Xbox 360] There are a few QTEs in *Tomb Raider*, but they're handled far better than they were in previous games.

## A brief history of Tomb Raider

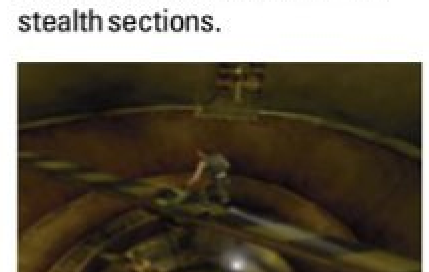
**TOMB RAIDER**
**1996**
Toby Gard created an iconic heroine for Core Design and videogame history is made. The end result was a stunning arcade adventure that sold over six million copies and spawned countless sequels.



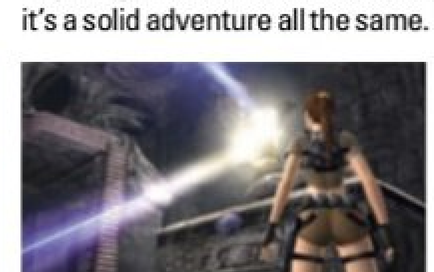
**TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION**
**1999**
After two console exclusives for PlayStation, Lara branched out to the Dreamcast. Despite several new abilities, Lara was starting to look a little tired.



**TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS**
**2003**
Lara's first (and last) PS2 adventure was quite simply terrible. Poor gameplay, awkward controls and terrible stealth sections.



**TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND 2006**
This was Crystal Dynamics' first *Tomb Raider* game and it's a good'un, focusing on tight gameplay and globe-trotting escapades. It doesn't really do anything new with the series, but it's a solid adventure all the same.



**LARA CROFT AND THE GUARDIAN OF LIGHT 2010**
The previous game from Crystal Dynamics was a fun twin stick shooter with clever puzzles and gorgeous visuals. A big departure for the series that proves Lara can navigate other genres.







## ★ GO DEEPER

>> This is Crystal Dynamics' fifth videogame to star Lara Croft. Its first was *Tomb Raider Legend* in 2006.

>> Keeley Hawes is no longer voicing Lara, having done four games for Crystal Dynamics. She's been taken over by *Grey's Anatomy*'s Camilla Luddington.

>> This is the first *Tomb Raider* with a multiplayer component. It was created by Eidos Montreal, the developers behind *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*.

» [Xbox 360] Certain scenes are a direct homage to *Uncharted*, but that's no bad thing in our book.





is nowhere to be seen; instead Lara simply picks up a determinable amount of 'salvage' and uses it to make weapons when she reaches any nearby camp site. Lara certainly survives in that she reaches the game's enjoyable finale, but regular mechanics like a slowly refilling energy bar mean you never really feel like you're in any danger of dying, and this is something of a shame, particularly when it juxtaposes so sharply against the tightly written story that Pratchett has crafted.

Tombs are also in short supply and definitely take a back seat to all the fire fights that frequently pop up. The original *Tomb Raider* featured huge caverns with numerous nooks and crannies to explore and various puzzles and traps to solve. The tombs here are far smaller, often consisting of a single physics-based puzzle that shouldn't cause too much head-scratching to solve. Think of the tombs found in the *Assassin's Creed* games, and you'll have a good idea of what to expect. They're perfectly fine and fit in nicely to *Tomb Raider*'s overall gameplay, but they're now nothing more than a pleasant diversion, and a further indication of just how much games are homogenised for today's market.

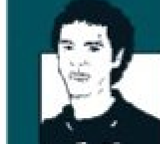
While it's heavily combat focused (particularly in *Tomb Raider*'s final third) Crystal Dynamics does get a lot right with the classic franchise, effortlessly rebooting it for a brand new generation of gamers. The sense of exploration throughout *Tomb Raider* remains excellent. Granted you'll be doing most of your orienteering above ground, but the island is full of rich locales that cover a variety of different environments, all of which are brilliantly detailed. Each area of the game also has a number of sidequests that range from lighting a set amount of shrines to collecting specific fauna, and while they're not needed to complete the game, the island design is so good you'll want to explore every last nook and cranny of it. It's good of Crystal Dynamics to add a 'Fast Travel' section then, meaning you can return to any part of the island to look for all your missing trinkets.

*Tomb Raider*'s pace is also superb, and while the main story can be completed in around nine hours, it's paced perfectly thanks to some great setpieces and some genuinely challenging fire fights. QTEs also crop up at certain parts of the game, but they're often unobtrusive and add greatly to the peril Lara finds herself in. *Tomb Raider* may well owe a nod to Nathan Drake (particularly with its new multiplayer mode) but in a way Lara is simply reclaiming what Naughty Dog borrowed from her in the first place. The end result is a rip-roaring adventure that should appeal to new and long term fans alike.

## Tomb Raider goes online

Perhaps the biggest change to Lara's latest adventure is that it now features a brand new multiplayer component. Like the core game it takes its influence from *Uncharted*, and has a heavy focus on team-based play. Teams are split between islanders and survivors and there are currently four different gameplay modes to take part in. Team Deathmatch is the most basic, while Rescue (survivors must retrieve a set amount of supplies) and Cry For Help (players must activate radio transmitters and protect precious batteries) proved surprising fun. Finally there's a simple free-for-all allowing everyone to simply fight against each other. Featuring the same multi-tiered level structure as *Uncharted*'s multiplayer, it's a strong addition to the game.

## OPINION




This *Tomb Raider* does feel very *Unchartedey*, and in terms of quality falls in below *Uncharted 2* but above *3*. Survival and hunting aspects aren't really cockles of the game's heart, but the new more believable Lara is great, the presentation and island design superb, the sense of scale and detail impressive too. Overall, this is a superb reboot that's got us wanting more.

**Stuart Hunt**

## In a nutshell

**It's not very original, borrowing from many other popular games, but Crystal Dynamics' reimagining of one of gaming's most important icons still manages to feel totally refreshing. It's an exciting new direction for the franchise.**

>> Score **85%**





» [Xbox 360] You don't really need to do any hunting in *Tomb Raider*, it's not for survival, just for bonus XP gathering.

# Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow – Mirror Of Fate

VAMPIRE HUNTER 3D

### INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** 3DS
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £32.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- » **DEVELOPER:** MERCURYSTEAM
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

### BRIEF HISTORY

» Castlevania is one of Konami's most popular, successful and enduring action adventure series. First appearing on the Famicom Disk System in 1986, the series has spawned some 40 games. The earliest were designed by developer Akihiko Nagata, currently Konami's Executive Corporate Officer.

### ✱ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow – Mirror Of Fate

**>> As well as *Lords Of Shadow* and *Mirror Of Fate*, MercurySteam previous projects include *American McGee Presents: Scrapland* and *Clive Barker's Jericho*.**

**>> *Mirror Of Fate* is set 25 years after the events of *Lords Of Shadow*, and focuses on the descendents of original hero Gabriel Belmont.**



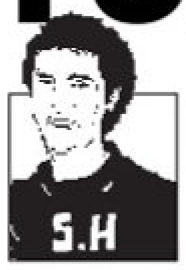
### ✱WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
**SUPER CASTLEVANIA (SNES)**



▽ SOMETHING NEW
**LORDS OF SHADOW (PS3/XBOX 360)**






***Lord Of Shadows* marked a bold new direction for the *Castlevania* franchise, one that didn't please all fans with its hack-and-slash *God Of War*-style take on the series.**

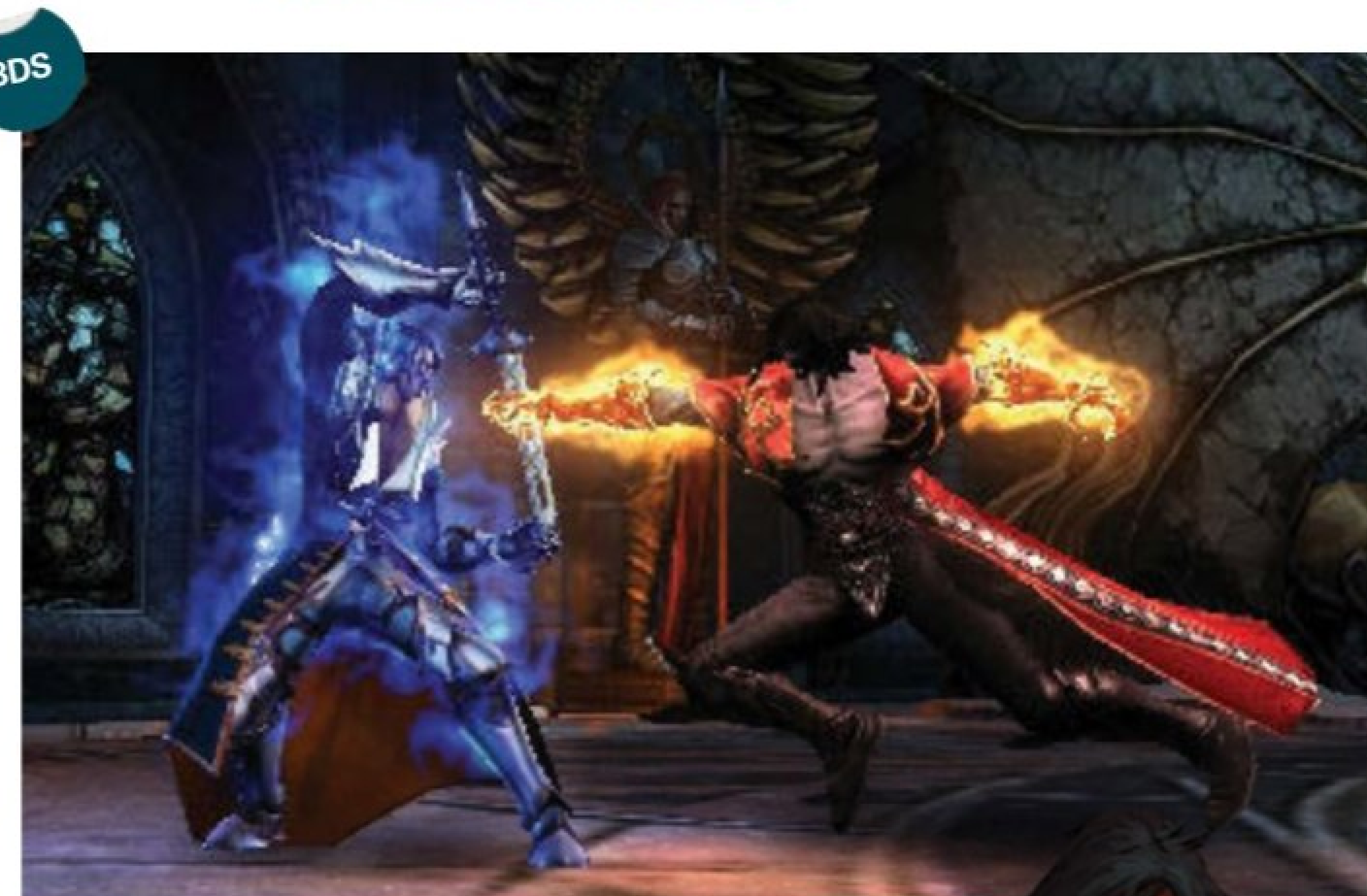
Personally we liked it; not only did it look and sound stunning, but it was refreshingly challenging and epic in size. *Mirror Of Fate* feels like MercurySteam retrofitting its polished *Castlevania* universe into the traditional template, and for the most part succeeding. Presentation-wise it's great. Its haunting music is fantastic and the 3D effects equally impressive.

One of the neatest aspects of *Mirror Of Fate* is that its story sees you assume the role of different characters throughout the story. Without wanting to give too much away, you're initially placed in the shoes of Gabriel Belmont before the story jumps forward and you're given control of Simon Belmont, Alucard and finally (in an epilogue style act) Trevor Belmont, and each character has their own set of attacks, weapons and special abilities which are gradually picked up over the course of the game.

Though elements of *Mirror Of Fate*'s design do come off feeling a bit generic and cyclic at times – we lost count of the amount of times we had to avoid steam jets and push and pull the same looking massive block into position so that we could reach an out-of-reach platform – you are getting three slightly different types of *Castlevania* game with each act.

The first (Simon) follows the metroidvania template the closest, and Alucard's has a greater focus on puzzle solving, while the final act feels more Super Castlevania IV in mould, with less exploration and more emphasise on chain swinging, combat and boss battles.

3DS



Combat in the game feels solid but never particularly elegant – a bit button mashy in fact, due to the reach of your whip being a bit on the long side – but there are a lot of attacks available to you. Bosses are also a bit of a mixed bag: generally challenging, but many only so due to their slow-to-whittle-down health bars and the fact it's difficult to react to their fidgety attacks.

Like its predecessor, *Mirror Of Fate* is long (when you beat game you unlock a hardcore mode), pretty and polished. It just doesn't quite have the same bite.

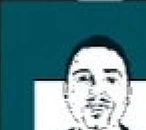
## In a nutshell

***Mirror Of Fate* tries to be a frenetic hack and slasher and engrossing metroidvania game and does a competent job at appeasing both camps. It's an entertaining but not legendary entry in the series.**

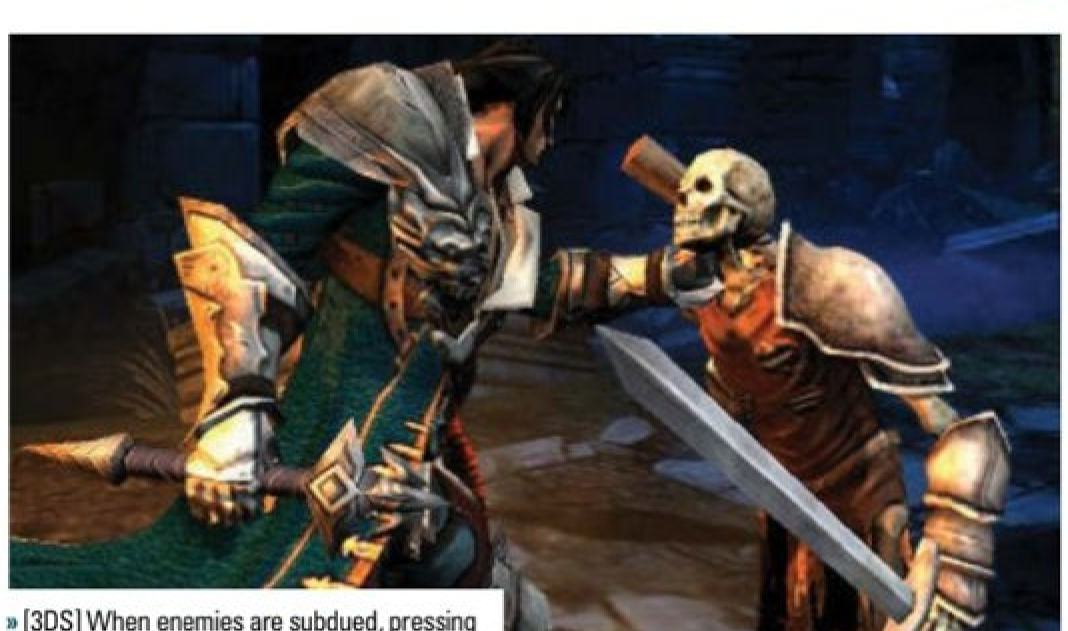
>> **Score 78%**



### OPINION




I was a big fan of Lords Of Shadow, so I've been looking forward to this 3DS game. So far I've not been disappointed, and while it doesn't capture the brilliance of *Symphony Of The Night* or *Super Castlevania IV*, it remains a slick offering that gets better the further you progress. A fun addition to the franchise.



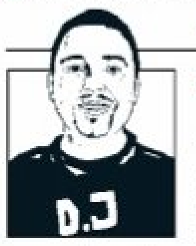
» [3DS] When enemies are subdued, pressing the R button will activate a finishing move.



# Arcadecraft

## PLAY A DIGITAL VERSION OF WALTER DAY

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBOX 360 » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** NA » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW » **PRICE:** 240 POINTS » **PUBLISHER:** FIREBASE INDUSTRIES » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE » **PLAYERS:** 1




**>> The concept of** *Arcadecraft* is excellent: manage your own arcade. Starting off in 1980, you must make your arcade as popular and as profitable as possible. You do this by buying the latest machines (all parodies of classic games) placing them in suitable locations, and ensuring each machine is well maintained and emptied on time. Punters will flock to the popular games and ignore the duff ones, prices and difficulty levels can be tweaked, and games can be constantly moved to make your arcade more attractive to visit.

It's absolutely glorious fun for the first couple of hours, as the learning curve is quite steep, requiring you to occasionally sell off cabs to make your monthly rent/hire targets. It's also fun seeing all the new machines coming in and working out what games they're parodying, or noticing little touches like picking up and ejecting trouble makers, or repeatedly shaking a machine to dislodge stuck coins.

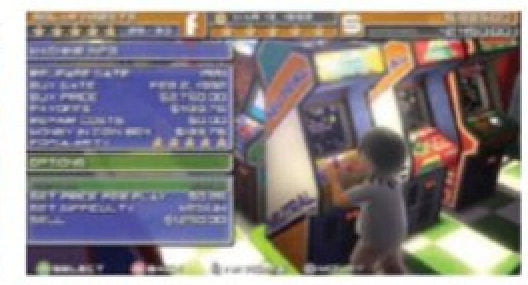
It's not long before you hit a ceiling however, and you soon find yourself sitting on piles of money with nothing to spend it on. It's a shame that *Arcadecraft* peaks so early, because it's tremendous fun while it lasts, becoming quite hectic as you race around your arcade emptying full machines and working out where you're going to place your next hit.

The developers are keen to support it with future updates, though, and a few tweaks should hopefully sort the difficulty out and give it a little more longevity. But as it stands, *Arcadecraft* shines incredibly brightly, but burns out far too quickly.

**>>** Score **68%**

X360



» [Xbox 360] Plan carefully, or it becomes a pain when you want to add new machines or evict troublemakers.

» [Xbox 360] Working out what games are being copied is a lot of fun. *Crawlers*, anyone?



# RETROROUND-UP



>> Every month we look at all the classics and latest releases that are available to buy or download

## ★ DOWNLOAD OF THE MONTH



INFORMATION

» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** $9.99 (£6.36)
» **Buy it from:** www.gog.com
» **Score:** 95%

# System Shock 2

**Return to *System Shock 2* today and the first thing that strikes you is just how damn good it still looks.** Sure, the textures are a little soft around the edges, and you can't always read things in the environment as easily as you'd like, but in terms of atmosphere the game is immense. The lighting remains superb, even after 14 years, giving *System Shock 2* an oppressive style that fits in well with its equally oppressive plot.

And it's a great story as well, telling the tale of an amnesia-stricken soldier who finds himself on stuck on a doomed spaceship, which has been infected by a deadly virus that has taken over the craft and mutated its crew members into horrible, deadly monstrosities.

*System Shock 2* mixes horror and science fiction to great effect, delivering a range of genuinely disgusting looking foes and creepy setpieces that still manage to scare some 14 years later. Gameplay genres are also tackled incredibly well and although *System Shock 2* is ostensibly a first-person shooter, it includes plenty of RPG elements, but easily dips its toes into a variety of other genres, ranging from survival horror to point-and-click adventure (courtesy of the excellent inventory system). It shouldn't work, but it does, delivering a beautifully balanced experience that still manages to impress.

*System Shock 2* is apparently GOG's most requested game of all time and it's easy to see why. This is a magnificent adventure that sits proudly alongside the likes of *Half-Life* as one of the best games of its type. It's supplemented by a number of GOG extras that range from the game's atmospheric soundtrack, to a radio interview with Ken Levine. There's even a pitch document for the game and two concept maps. Just look at them as particularly sweet icing for a truly magnificent cake.

## >> OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



### Castlevania

» **System:** NES
» **Buy it for:** £4.99
» **Buy it from:** Virtual Console (3DS)
» **Score:** 70%

» While there's no denying its classic heritage, *Castlevania* is showing its age. Simon is sluggish, struggling with jumps and his whip, allowing him to get too easily hit by enemies. There's a clunkiness that pervades *Castlevania* and it's even more noticeable due to the game's high difficulty level. The stage design remains tight and imaginative and the core gameplay is still enjoyable, but it's starting to feel old.



### Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance

» **System:** PS3 (tested), Xbox 360
» **Buy it for:** £39.99
» **Buy it from:** Online/Retail
» **Score:** 90%

» We were expecting wonderfully nutty things from Platinum's take on the *Metal Gear* universe, and we've not been disappointed. At its core rests a deep combat system that's accessible, but reveals untold depths once the difficulty level has been cranked up. Add in a clever scoring system and you end up with an great modern high score chaser.



### Sensible World Of Soccer 96/97

» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** $5.99
» **Buy it from:** www.gog.com
» **Score:** 84%

» *Sensible World Of Soccer* is quite simply superb and this PC offering is no different. Fast-paced and with lovely graphics, it's an amazingly nippy game that still remains insanely playable to this day. Full of options and with plenty of gameplay tweaks, what it lacks in realism it makes up for with sheer excitement. It's only really let down due to Gog not making it joypad compatible (so you'll need to sort this yourself).



### DRM Death Ray Manta

» **System:** iOS
» **Buy it for:** £1.49
» **Buy it from:** AppStore
» **Score:** 60%

» *Death Ray Manta* is a gorgeous looking game, with Jeff Minter-styled aesthetics and traditional Eugene Jarvis twin-stick gameplay. There's no complex score system in place – you simply score a point for collecting each stage's Space Tiffin or clearing a stage – meaning you can just sit back and enjoy the action. It's a pity then that twitchy controls and a lack of online leaderboards give you no impetus to return to it.

# Capcom Arcade Cabinet

» **System:** Xbox 360 (Tested) PS3 » **Buy it for:** 320-2000 Points
» **Buy it from:** Xbox Live Arcade, PSN » **Score:** 80%

**Capcom kicks off its 30th anniversary celebrations with this fantastic tribute to its past, which celebrates 17 of its early arcade hits.** Coded by M2, the emulation in *Capcom Arcade Cabinet* is superb, delivering a bewildering array of features that range from adding scanlines, to changing the screen orientation or twiddling with individual sound channels. It's incredibly detailed and allows for a staggering amount of control over each game.

The presentation throughout is gorgeous, offering history, galleries and various gameplay modes for each game, as well as leaderboards and online play (where relevant). In fact, the only thing that lets this impressive compilation down is the mixture of games is a little off, with classics like *Ghosts 'N Goblins*, *Commando*, *1943* and *Black Tiger* sharing space with dross like *Avengers* and *Trojan*. There's no faulting the love and attention that's gone into this though, and we can only hope that CPS II titles will be added in the future.



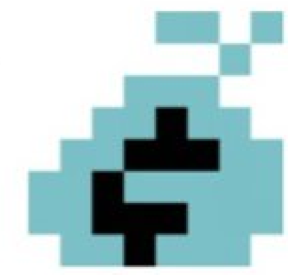
# HOMEBREW

**>> The scene's latest news and reviews**




# YOU HAVE TO WIN THE GAME

## OR HOW TO PUT CGA GRAPHICS INTO A C64



**Judging by conversations seen on development forums in the past, games that don't at least stretch a machine a little aren't popular with coders, but something like El Hobbit could be shunted over to another, more release-starved machine fairly easily. So which is better, a straight conversion of an existing game or one that's tailored to the machine it's running on? Answers on a postcard, please!**

**Released in May 2012, Pirate Hearts' *You Have To Win The Game* was a very tough platformer wrapped in a retro-styled housing right down to the simulated CRT effect applied to the play area. And the mission, as the name suggests, is to complete the game with a 100 per cent score but that's easier said than done since, although there's no lives counter to worry about and there are regular respawn points strategically placed around the map – represented by bells with a rope that the character rings as he passes – it involves visiting every location in the game and collecting all of the items dotted around the landscape.**

Some of those items initially appear to be impossible to reach, but as the game progresses a couple of power-ups that resemble crystal balls will be found first make the otherwise insubstantial cyan and purple "ghost blocks" solid, which opens up more of the map and allows the spring-heeled boots and spider gloves – which make it possible to jump while in mid air and cling to the walls respectively – to be located as well. But even with all of these superpowers at hand, some of the later rooms will still be difficult to traverse safely and getting that perfect percentage will take time and patience.

And, along with some rooms having exits that rather confusingly wrap around on themselves so exiting to the right sees the player return to the same screen on the left, the designer has also thrown a couple of fairly dirty tricks in; for example, there's a room relatively early in the game called "don't be hasty" which has a wall of cyan ghost blocks dividing it in two so, if the power-up that enables those blocks has been collected before this room is visited, the money bag there is impenetrably walled away, making a perfect completion impossible.

The C64 graphics and sound have been based very closely on the faux four-colour CGA and single channel beeper-style sound of Pirate Hearts' original PC release, which means that the machine renders everything in just four colours – cyan, white, purple and black – and it's SID chip is only producing some simple spot effects and jingles during play. Although we can understand that C64 developer Kabuto was going for as faithful a conversion as possible, we would've liked the option of an in-game tune or perhaps the EGA graphics released as an extension for the Windows game at the end of 2012.

The hardier gamers out there who are accustomed to slogging their way through tough platforming action and have the kind of staying power that's a requirement for the more hardcore examples of 8-bit gaming like Monty On The Run or Jet Set Willy will almost certainly find this challenge enjoyable, but the high frustration level in some of You Have To Win The Game's screens and those aforementioned dirty tricks mean that it's going to drive quite a few more casual players up the wall.

**87%**




» [C64] That's a funny looking shade of green.





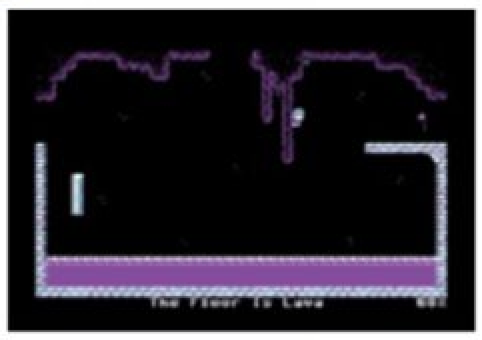
**FORMAT:** C64
**DEVELOPER:** KABUTO
**LINK:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/WIN-THE-GAME-C64
**RELEASE:** 2012
**PRICE:** FREE, CARTRIDGE £TBA
**REVIEWED BY:** JASON KELK

» [C64] Now, where was I…?






» [C64] Three is the magic number…



» [C64] Purple lava – whoever thought it?



# NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
**retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk**

## STRUCTRIS

» **FORMAT:** APPLE II » **DEVELOPER:** MARTIN HAYE
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/STRUCTRIS-A2 » **PRICE:** FREE

**Looking at the** screenshots, *Structris* for the Apple II might appear to be another *Tetris* clone but looks can be deceiving. It's not a copy; *Structris* has a fair few little twists of its own to keep things interesting. The player controls a small flashing block and shapes are regularly launched in their direction, so long term survival is a combination of forming rows by hovering around the part of the well which need filling and waiting for the "Evil Programmer" to aim a block in that direction while not getting trapped by the falling pieces in the process.

Reaching the required quota of lines finishes the current level and starts the next with a smaller well to work with, but each piece launched is chosen because it will fit snugly into the existing playfield without leaving any gaps so it won't end up cluttering up the well with impossible to recover situations or walling the player in. While we'd admit that it might be lacking visually, *Structris* offers an interesting twist on the traditional *Tetris* formula and is fun to play.

**83%**



» [Apple II] I'm down to earth like this.





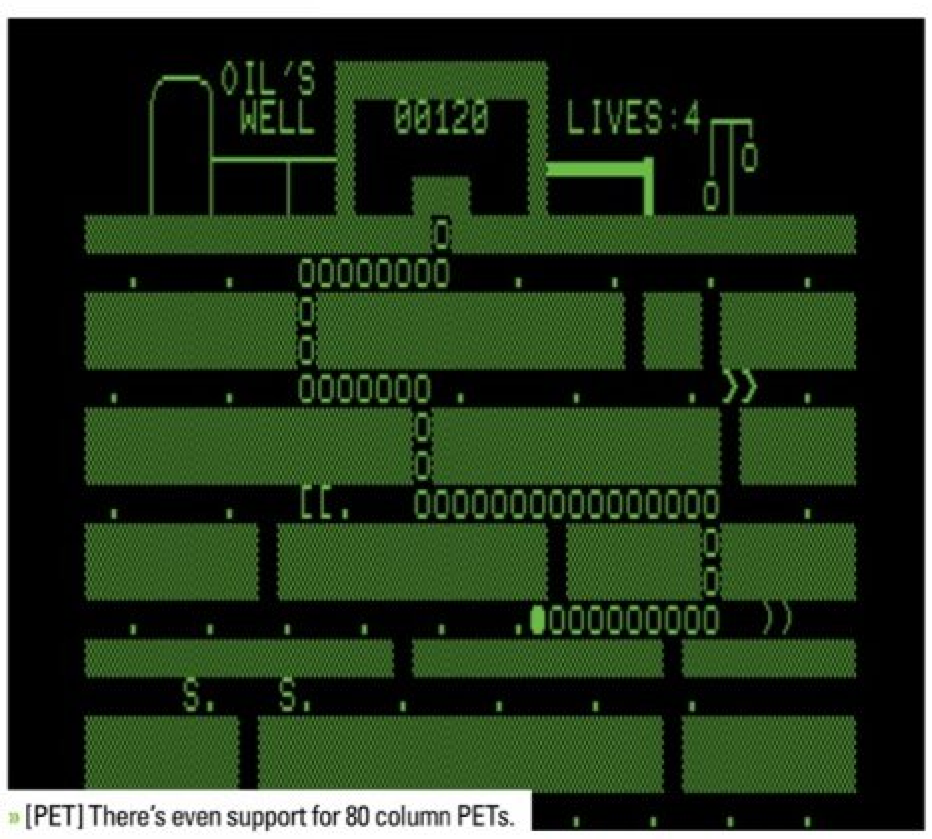
## OIL'S WELL

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE PET » **DEVELOPER:** MR. NOP
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/OILS-WELL-PET » **PRICE:** FREE

***Oil's Well* is** an action game quite similar to the coin-op *Anteater* where the player has to drill for oil. And because there aren't any major reserves left under their already well-milked property, an investment in a shiny new drill mounted on a flexible cable that can be guided from the surface to search out small pockets of black gold has been necessary.

But this new drill isn't the only thing moving around below the surface and, while its head will make mincemeat of any subterranean critters it encounters, if they sneak up on the cabling used to push it around and have a quick nibble, the entire machine will be irreparably damaged. The movement patterns for these drill-damaging varmints are simple to predict so the only tricky thing is keeping an eye on all of them.

**84%**



» [PET] There's even support for 80 column PETs.

# EL HOBBIT (VAH-KA'S CUT)

» **FORMAT:** SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** THE MOJON TWINS
» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/EL-HOBBIT-SPEC » **PRICE:** FREE

***El Hobbit* was** one of three entries into a Hobbit-themed competition held by Spanish website Bytemaniacos inspired by the release of the recent movie. But the Mojon Twins have based their game on what they remembered from reading the book several years ago, so their game therefore takes a few liberties with the plot and Bilbo now has to go in search of Gandalf and the dwarves before moving on to finding the One Ring, sneaking past Gollum and burgling Smaug's cave.

The graphics use a top down perspective view similar to games like *The Legend Of Zelda*, but Bilbo's quest is far simpler and rather short as well so reasonably seasoned gamers should reach Smaug fairly quickly. El Hobbit isn't a particularly serious game, as you might have guessed – evidenced by the motorcycle parked near where Gandalf is found. If you're a bit of a Tolkien fan, it might mess a little with your head, but it's still fairly amusing.

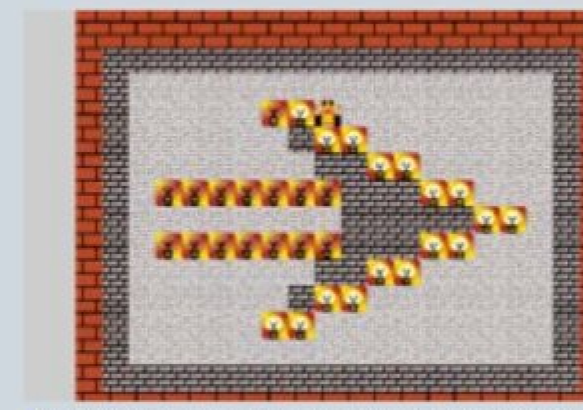
**74%**


» [Spectrum] On your bike, matey.


» [Spectrum] Woah, it's a snake!

## WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community


» [Amiga] All these bulbs must cost a fortune to run!

### >> BUT AFTER MIDNIGHT MORNING WILL COME

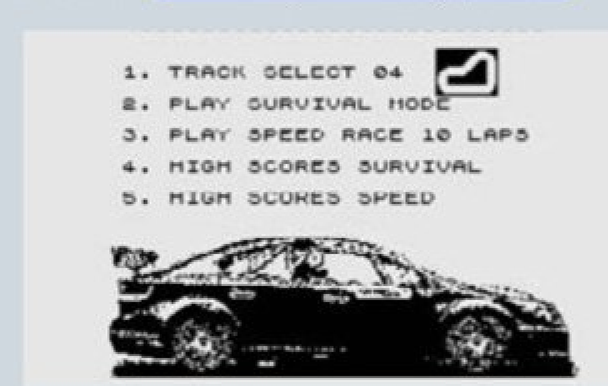
Fans of puzzle games might want to try *Szalter* for the Amiga, where they'll be handed control of a droid that resembles Wall-E which has been charged with turning on every lightbulb on screen just by moving past it – that doesn't sound hard, but getting the corners lit is fiddly. Downloads are available from the website behind www.kikstart.eu/szalter-amiga



» [Spectrum] Anyone for tennis?

### >> WHAT A LOAD OF CRAP

The 2013 iteration of the Comp.Sys.Sinclair Crap Game Competition has recently started, this time hosted by 2012 "winner" David Hughes. The CSSCGC was inspired by the "great" games on compilations like Cascade's Cassette 50 so contributors are challenged to produce the worst possible game for the Spectrum. The results usually vary between insipid and inspired, making a stop at downright strange along the way. Find it at www.csscgc2013.blogspot.co.uk



» [ZX81] Shift into turbo.

### >> YOU GOT A GREEN LIGHT BABY

Spectrum programming hero Jim Bagley has recently turned his hand to the ZX81 and, after a mere month to become acclimatised, has released Jim Bagley's *ZX81 Racing*. Fans of time trialbased driving will need a souped up ZX81 with 16K of memory and WRX high resolution graphics support to go screeching around the tracks and the download can be found over at www.kikstart.eu/bagley-zx81

# HOMEBREW

>> The scene's latest news and reviews

## WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

### >> RULE THE INSECT WORLD

*Hive* is a strategy game where two players place hexagonal tiles with insects into the playfield with the ultimate aim being to surround the opponent's queen while simultaneously defending their own. What makes *Hive* unusual is that it's based on an award-winning tabletop game and developer Blue Line has licensed it from the designer John Yianni. Sadly, there isn't a single-player option with AI available so *Hive* is for two players only, but if you've got a friend handy it might be worth looking at www.kikstart.eu/hive-xblig



### >> A-MAZE-ING STUFF

*Avatar Maze Game* is, unsurprisingly, a game where the player's Xbox Live avatar runs around a maze so apart from mentioning item collection it doesn't need much expansion. There's something of a "retro vibe" to this and the couple of quick goes we've given it so far reminded us a little of titles like *3D Maze* on the VIC-20 so players wanting a simple challenge might enjoy it. www.kikstart.eu/avatar-maze-xblig



### FLASH BOREDOM



**Want to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on Retro Gamer's Flash game of the month. This month we look at Retro Pixel Racers.**

IF THE NAME SOUNDS FAMILIAR IT'S BECAUSE THIS IS A FLASH VERSION OF THE SUPER SPRINT-INSPIRED XBLIG TITLE! RACE YOUR CAR AROUND A SERIES OF SINGLE SCREEN TRACKS AGAINST COMPUTER-CONTROLLED DRIVERS. STARS UNLOCKING NEW TRACKS ARE DISHED OUT BASED ON PLACING, WHILE PRIZE MONEY GOES TOWARDS UPGRADING THE CAR. WWW.KIKSTART.EU/RP-RACERS-FLASH

## MORE GAMES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING...



# PESTER

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/PESTER-XBLIG



**The graphics in** Flump Studios' second XBLIG game *Pester* take their inspiration from Eighties coin-ops but the gameplay is much more built around the bullet hell shoot-'em-ups that appeared from the Nineties onwards, so just about everything in the game is *seriously* trigger happy and some of the enemies will take quite a kicking before they're destroyed. To make the playing field a little more even there are power-ups dished out during the action which boost firepower and speed, a supply of smart bombs and the hyper bar which, when fully charged by collecting coins left by destroyed nasties, can be activated for a temporary but violent burst of extra blasting power.

There are four play modes to select from the main menu – the default "classic", a "survival" mode where the ship starts with all power-ups enabled but only one life, an "asteroid belt" to fly through unarmed and the "boss mode" which throws all of the bosses at the player in rapid succession – which can then be modified further with options such as beginner mode, having the directional controls reversed, playing against the clock in some form or controlling two ships simultaneously with the one control pad. *Pester* is a solid piece of no-nonsense blasting action and shoot-'em-up fans should find that at least one of the play modes will suit their tastes.



# ON A ROLL 3D

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/ON-A-ROLL-XBLIG

***On A Roll 3D*** is sort of like a videogame version of those real world toys that allow children to construct complicated tracks to roll marbles over, except that here the player takes the role of the marble! Each stage is populated with pits, spikes and laser beams to avoid and there's some puzzle solving involved like the doors which are opened using switches, some of which must be held down with things found elsewhere in the level. The graphics are solid with six distinct terrains to roll through – each containing four levels with the last being a boss battle – and the difficulty ramps up at a comfortable speed as the game progresses, although players will always need to be on their toes.





# BLEED

» **DOWNLOAD:** WWW.KIKSTART.EU/BLEED-XBLIG

***Bleed* seems a** little pricey compared to other Xbox Live Indie Games, clocking in at 400 Points. It's worth the entry point however, as it's a superb fusion of *Mega Man* and *Devil May Cry* that proves to be an insane amount of fun. You're effectively taking on other super heroes so that you can take their place in the hall of fame. Each boss has a stage designed around them and they're as devilishly designed as anything you'd find in a *Mega Man* game.



It's fortunate that you have plenty of cool moves at your disposal, with the ability to slow down time allowing you to pull off some impressive feats of skill. Excellently paced and with a charming visual style, *Bleed* is the sort of game you should be downloading immediately.



# HOMEBREW HEROES

## SINCE WE'VE PREVIOUSLY ENJOYED FLUMP STUDIOS' SUPER KILLER HORNET AND WERE QUITE TAKEN WITH ITS LATEST RELEASE PESTER THIS ISSUE, WE DECIDED TO GRAB A FEW MOMENTS WITH PROGRAMMER PAUL MARRABLE TO PESTER HIM ABOUT THIS LATEST RELEASE



Q&A

***Pester* blends bullet hell shooting with retro looks, how did that art style come about?**
I've been playing shooters for over 20 years now and deeply love the genre.

I would say *Galaga* and *DonPachi* are definitely two of my favourite games and it just felt right to make a hybrid of the two.

It's not just looks though, I've tried to blend the gameplay as well, instead of set bullet patterns I've tried to randomise everything so every play is different and keeps you on your toes, similar to *Galaga* but the overall feel definitely leans towards classic bullet hell games.

**And all the game modes, did the idea for those come at together or over time?**
They all kind of just happened. At first I just wanted to make something small and fun, then as development went on I just kept thinking "Wouldn't it be cool if there were two ships to control?" or "This game needs a survival mode!" I just kept adding features I thought would be cool, until I ended up with ninety-six combinations. I'm not sure I've even played them all.

**Are there any moments that stand out during the development of the game?**
Well I got my wife pregnant, does that count? It's not exactly development related but it definitely stands out. Nothing gets a lady in the mood like C# and multi-dimensional arrays. Other than that it's all bit a bit of a blur, looking back it's like "Did I make that, how did that happen?"

Most of the stand-out moments have come after the release of *Pester*. Attending Game City nights in Birmingham, where I saw people actually play it for the first time was a particular highlight. Just an amazing feeling and such good feedback, it was the first time I ever thought 'Hey, I might be good at this'.

**What is involved in getting something like *Pester* up and running on the Xbox 360?**
Well, that's the great thing about Xbox Indies, it really is easy and cheap to get set up.

Get an Xbox, download the SDK, pay £60 and you're away. The obvious downside is that you probably won't make any money, but if I just wanted to make money I'd sell drugs.

**And, in hindsight, do you feel that there's anything that you would have done differently?**
Not really, there was a spelling mistake in the first version which really bugged me but that was only up for a few days. The good thing about XBLIG is that it's a good place for feedback and updates are easy. Anything that I think I should have done differently I can just fix and send an update. It's a great place to mould a game, by the time I get around to releasing a PC version it will be as close to perfect as I can make it.

**Finally, what has Flump Studios got in store for the future? Something similar?**
There are a few things going on at the moment, for the next month or two I want to concentrate on our Windows Phone projects. We're just coming up to 250,000 downloads and I'd quite like to hit the million before summer, just for bragging rights.

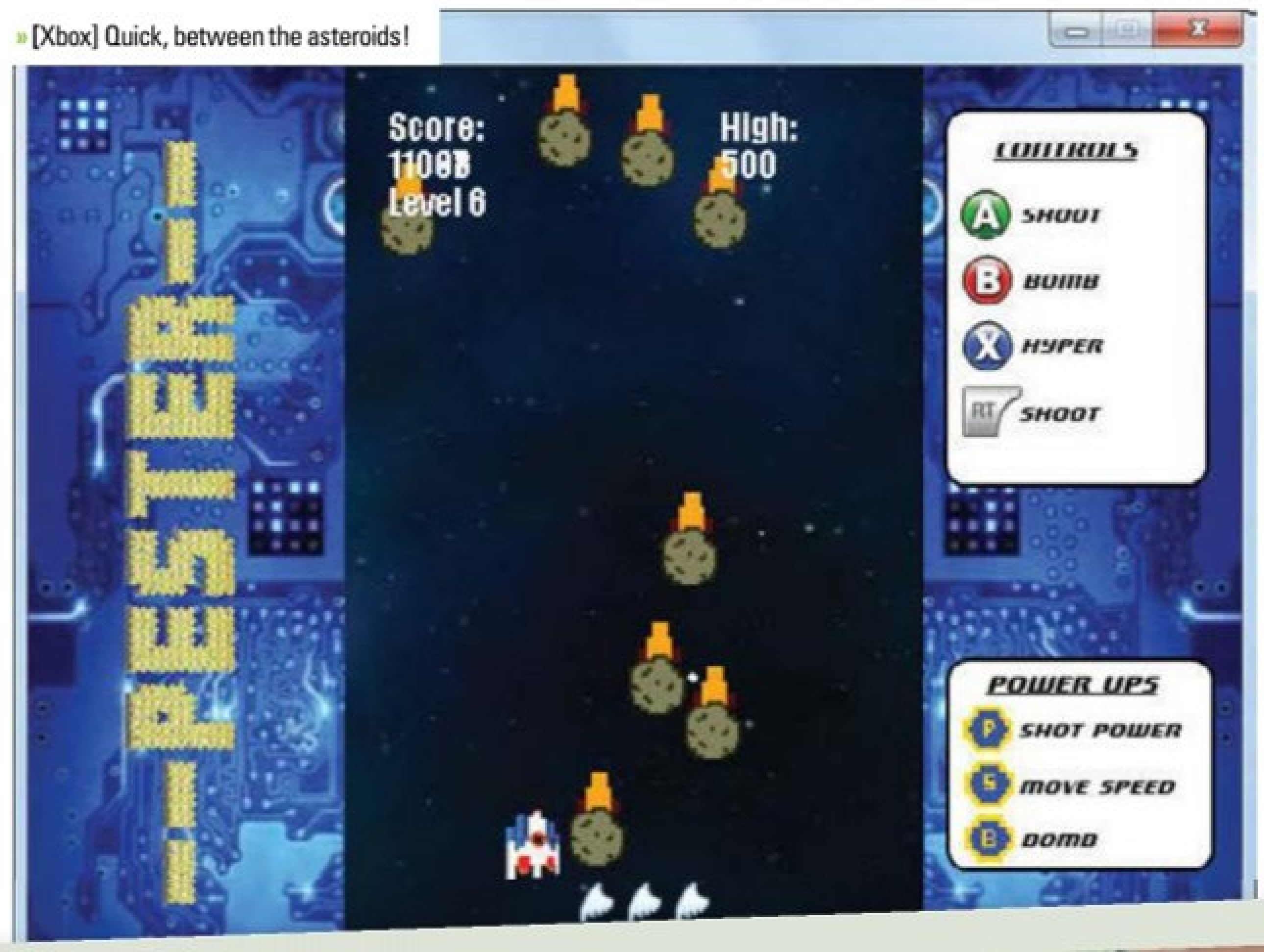
Then on to the next Xbox indie project, I really want to release a trilogy of shooters for XBLIG before moving onto another platform, no idea what it'll be like though. Then maybe I'll sell some drugs.







[Xbox] Quick, between the asteroids!

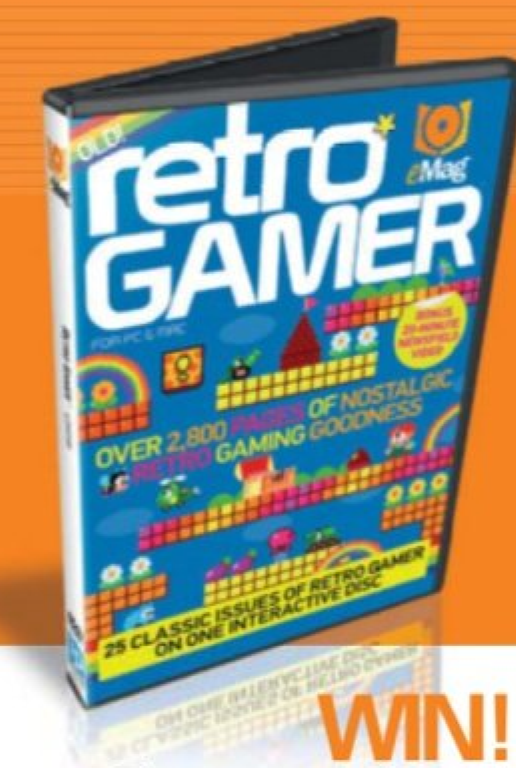





Who would live in a place like this?

# MAILBAG

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## STAR LETTER

### RETRO CAKE




**Dear Retro Gamer,**

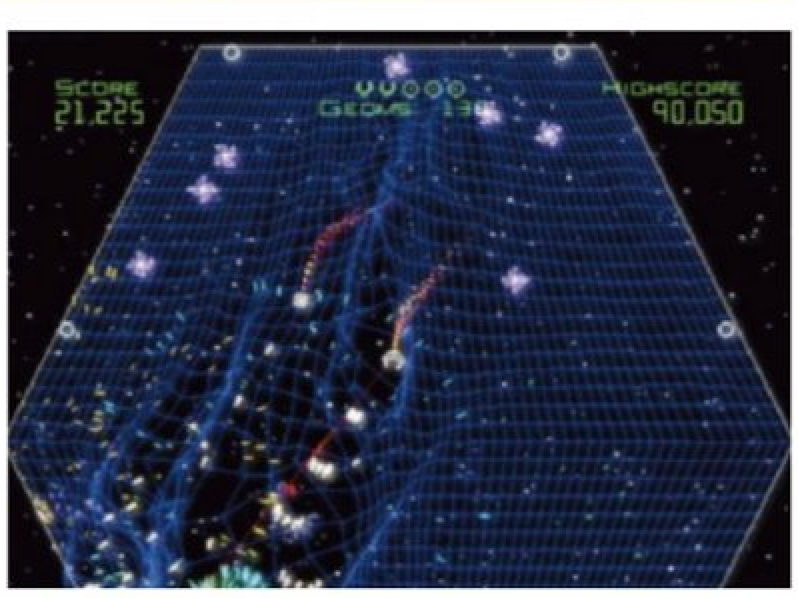
I'm always seeing myself as a miniscule speck of useless dust in this life and just live every day as it comes. I don't follow any sports nor do I religiously watch soaps; I'm a loner. Have been all my life. One thing I am passionate about though is **Retro Gamer** and retro games. Not only because of the groundbreaking software releases at the time, but because all the games invoke certain memories from my childhood. Because of this love for your mag I have EVERY single issue to date and will never part with my collection.

I recently turned 33 and my beautiful fiance Leeann designed me a special birthday cake themed around what comes first in my life: you guys. Not a day goes by that I don't pick up the mag and read a little of **RG** whilst on my throne (which is my hiding spot when the kids are getting too much) and bask in the ambience of retro memories. Thanks so much for giving me a reason to live.

Yours sincerely,

Nik Whale

**That's a lovely letter and a really amazing cake. We're only sorry that you didn't send us a slice to try, Nik.**

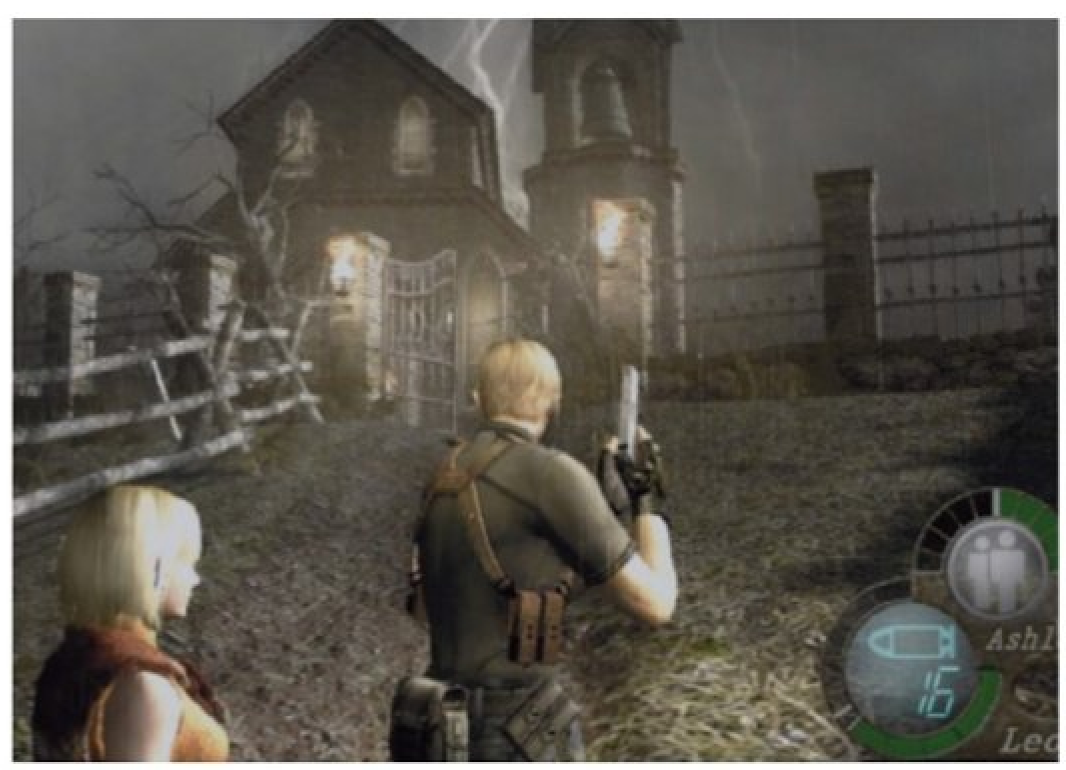



## HD REMAKES

**Dear Retro Gamer,**

Why are most HD remakes rubbish? Time and time again I happily preorder these releases, only to find that they look nowhere near as good as I was expecting. I recently purchased the *Hitman* HD trilogy, but they didn't appear to look any better than the PC versions I own. What do you guys look for when you are reviewing these collections, as I noticed that you don't give many of them high scores – *Resident Evil 4*, *Silent Hill* – even when they are all generally considered to be classic games. Oh and also, will you be reviewing the *Zone Of The Enders* collection?

Dean Matthews



» [Xbox 360] The game is amazing, the port fairly average, and not really worth the outlay if you already own the original.

**We tend to review HD remakes a little differently to reviews of newer games, Dean. We're aware that a lot of readers might own the original game already, so we look at whether the new version offers enough to make it worth upgrading for. Games like *Resident Evil* fall down here, because while the gameplay remains excellent, little effort has gone into the actual conversion. You also have to consider how well the game still holds up, but as you pointed out, the selected games means this isn't as much of an issue. Unfortunately we received *Zone Of The Enders* a little too late to review, so we're unlikely to cover it now.**

## BACK IN THE GAME

**Hi guys at Retro Gamer,**

I want to thank you for getting me back into gaming. You see, I had been very into gaming in the Eighties on the Spectrum, and had a PlayStation in the late Nineties, but then I grew to be that fiend; the 'jaded retro gamer'. I was just not interested – games were no longer for me.

I then started getting **Retro Gamer** magazine. Then I bought a Nintendo DS, just to keep my hand in. I played 'casual' game *Geometry Wars Galaxies* on my DS, so 'casually' that I am now joint top of the world leaderboards (with tag COMMANDO72). I would keep my DS console on for weeks on end, to hone a perfect score, and play *Geometry Wars* for six hours per night after work (pausing the game each time I had to go to work, or sleep, or eat)

Then I casually started doing a retro game channel for YouTube about Spectrum games, and this now has nearly 2,000 videos on it. This last week I wanted to replace my old broken PS1 (with a replacement second-hand one, just to keep on playing *Q*Bert* and *Asteroids* on original PS1 CDs). After several shopping trips I now have a new LCD TV, and a PS3 all hooked up to broadband. So I might even say I am myself hooked on gaming again.

Thanks for making me interested in gaming again. There are tons of great new games coming out, and I am no longer the jaded retro gamer.

Andrew Masters

**Glad to hear that you enjoy the magazine, Andrew. You'll have to send us details about your Spectrum channel as well, as it's high time we did another YouTube round-up article.**

## DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

**Wreck-It Ralph**

**This month everyone's been watching Disney's *Wreck-It Ralph*. Stuart felt the film sagged in the middle and that the videogame references dried up to early, while Jon was unimpressed with the tired 'It's important to be yourself' message. Darran really enjoyed it, laughing at jokes no one else in the cinema seemed to understand, and quickly bought the US Blu-ray.**

## WIN!

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our latest eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 3**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words, or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…

## WHERE'S ZOOL?

**Dear Retro Gamer**,

I've just seen the announcement that *Superfrog* is returning, something I'm very excited about. This got me thinking though, what on earth happened to *Zool*? I loved playing the original Amiga game and I remember (but didn't play) the sequel, but

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after that my memory goes fuzzy. Was there a third *Zool* game? Was one ever planned, and more importantly, will *Zool* be returning?

Jeremy Smyth

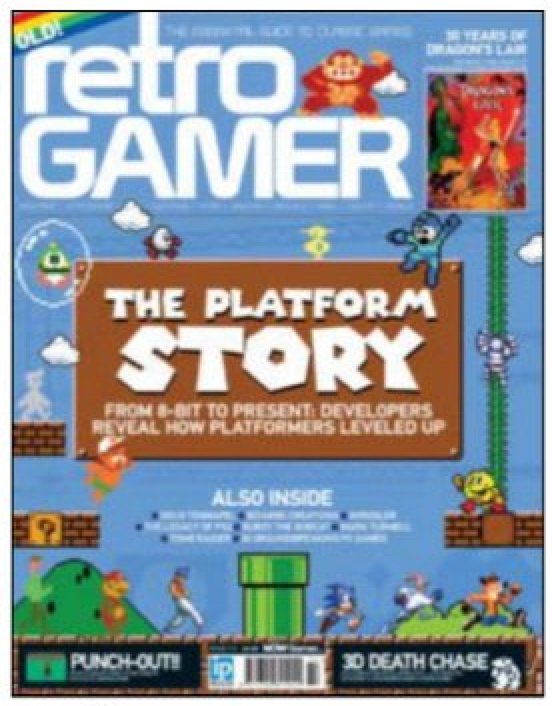
**We're sorry Jeremy, but your *Zool* guesses are about as good as ours. We do know that you didn't imagine a sequel, but this is the first news we've heard about a third game. Members of Gremlin Graphics are becoming more and more active, and *Zool* itself was ported to a huge number of systems, so we'll try and get a making of and hopefully more concrete answers.**



» [Master System] It's no *Sonic*, but *Zool* remains surprisingly playable. This 8-bit version is particularly impressive.

## THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY...

**This issue's covers that nearly happened**



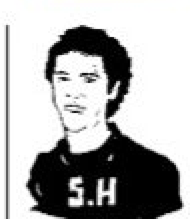






### DARRAN

We were keen to do a platform cover this month, as we had access to some great developers. We used *Super Mario Bros* as a base as it's recognisable the world over, but integrating sprites from different eras wasn't working as well as we'd like. We made a few more attempts, but it didn't work out.



### STUART

We knew that a *Dragon's Lair* cover would look ace, but we didn't know what direction to take it in. This is another classic image of Dirk, but the artwork felt a little too new. There was also an issue with spacing, so we decided to go with the classic image that currently adorns the front cover.

# From the forum

» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

**Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…**

## What's your favourite platformer and why?

**The Laird**
I have never been a massive fan of platformers, but I adore the *Bubble Bobble* games, especially the first one. They are true timeless classics that can warm even the coldest heart.

**gman72**
*Pandamonium One* and *Two* on PSOne. Stunning 3D platformers and hard as nails. *Castlevania* series – well the earlier ones – gothic horror platforming?

**Mayhem**
There will probably be a lot of *Mario* and *Sonic* mentions, so I'm going to plump for *Impossible Mission* on the C64. A timeless classic that combines ingenuity with deviousness, and repeatedly stabs at your brain to make it think. If you die, it's your fault, and you can't say that about a lot of platformers.

**ncf1**
I can't go past the original *Bubble Bobble*. It's the only platformer I still play yearly – and on multiple formats – since it came out, and I actually don't see that trend stopping any time soon.

**Megamixer**
For a more modern choice, *Spyro The Dragon*. It's a tough call between the original and the first sequel but I have fond memories of the first game's music and levels. Sure, there was nothing revolutionary about it, but it had charm, a polished design and an ace Stuart Copeland soundtrack. Much better than today's *Skylanders* incarnation of *Spyro*.

**Kai**
One of the most criminally overlooked platformers is *Twinworld – Land Of Vision* (Amiga). Beautiful scenario, wonderful music, lots of secrets. Marvellous!

**Spacepatrol**
Probably a little bit modern for most readers, but for me the original *Jak And Daxter* is the best looking, most fun platform of all time and about the only game I have seen through to 100 per cent completion. Just need to get a new PS3 so I can grab the HD trilogy!

**fahrenheit1987**
There were some great platform games on the Spectrum, but my favourite, despite all those great ones (*JSW*, *Monty Mole*, *Dynamite Dan*) was the budget release of *Fahrenheit 3000*, which I finally completed a year or two ago.

**sscott**
*Bounty Bob Strikes Back* on the Atari 800 is my favourite platformer by far.

**Gordon Bennett**
*Jumping Flash* on the PS1. The first-person perspective and bright, colourful 3D levels were breathtaking at the time. It controls well with a bit of practice largely due to having the camera look down as you jump. And it has a fantastic, incredibly catchy soundtrack that has remained firmly lodged in the corners of my brain ever since.


**retro GAMER**

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# Let's Go, Mr Driver!

**As Taito's popular arcade franchise turns 25, we get back behind the wheel and take every game in the series for a spin**




## Also inside...



### The Adventures Of Indiana Jones

■ We reveal the thrilling stories behind three of Indy's biggest adventures



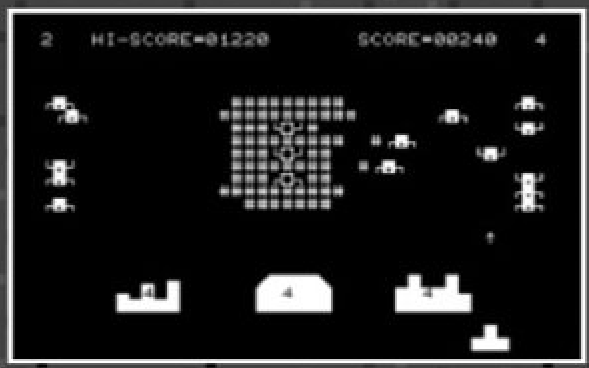

### NBA JAM

■ Mark Turmell and John Newcomer reveal the origins of one of the most successful arcade sports games ever



### Adventure

■ Warren Robinett looks back on his genre-spawning and groundbreaking Atari 2600 game




### Seventies Home Computers

■ We investigate early home microcomputers and their impact on the industry










# Wave Race 64

## IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PHYSICS

RETROREVIVAL

» NINTENDO
» N64
» 1996

**Before I played *Wave Race 64* my only experience with jetbikes in videogames was *Jetbike Simulator*. I loved that game by the Oliver twins, even if it was several pounds more expensive than their previous games. *Wave Race 64* was something else entirely, and while there have been many... Alright, a few decent stabs at the genre since its release in 1996, nothing has ever come close to the brilliance of Nintendo's original game.**

Looking back I think the main reason for this is that the physics really appeared to make an impact on the game, and more importantly, the way you approached the game. Sure, later releases like *Carve* and *Splashdown*, and even Nintendo's own *Wave Race Blue Storm* had far prettier visuals and more impressive physics, but they never really impacted on the player in the same way.

In a normal racing game you simply try and learn the best racing line to be found on each corner, but that never held true with *Wave Race 64*. A simple corner on one track would have to be handled completely differently on a second or third lap and you'd instead find yourself looking for the swells and rises that would help shave precious seconds off your time. Eagle eyes were a necessity in *Wave Race 64* and the impressive and amazingly realistic physics meant that you could soon tell from an incoming wave where you needed to be in order to get the best lap times.

Despite its realistic water physics, *Wave Race 64* was still very much an arcade game, and not a simulator; allowing you to race side by side with inquisitive dolphins and pull off gravity defying stunts. Of course, showboating was all well and good but you had to be mindful that your crazy stunts wouldn't hamper your all-important lap time. It gave *Wave Race 64* a nice feeling or risk verses reward that it never quite managed to pull off on the GameCube.

All in all, *Wave Race 64* was a complete gem for Nintendo's 64-bit console, and quite the step up from the top-down shenanigans found in *Jetbike Simulator* on the Amstrad CPC. I still love both games, though *Wave Race 64* just pips *Jetbike Simulator* at the post.







LAP
3
18 km/h
1'26"723
+2"011
+2"388
MAX POWER


WATERCRAFT SELECT
Ⓐ ENTER
Ⓑ GO BACK
1P
WATERCRAFT SETTINGS
NORMAL
CUSTOM
HANDLING
LIGHT
HEAVY
ENGINE
DASH
TOP END
GRIP
LOOSE
TIGHT
R.HAYAMI

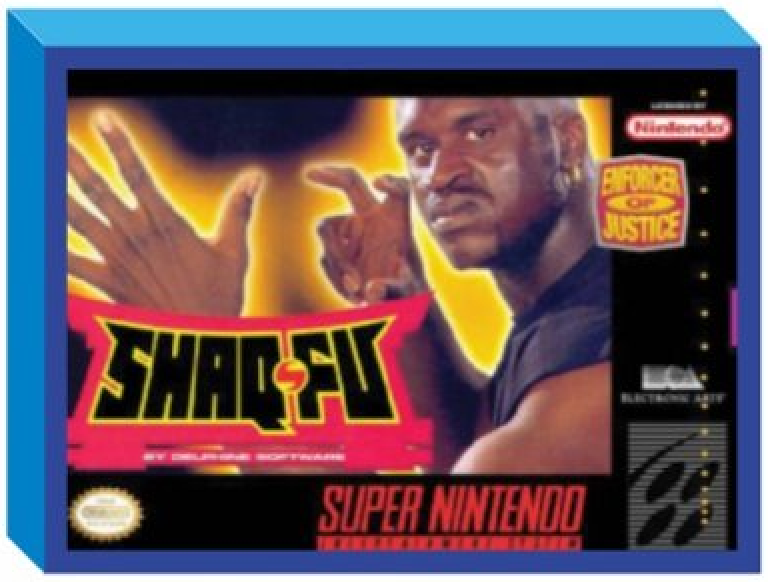

LAP
SPEED
1
79 km/h


TIME
RANK
LAP
SPEED
0'23"483
3
1
97 km/h
MAX POWER
MISS
POWER


LAP
SPEED
2
97 km/h
MAX POWER


TIME
RANK
LAP
SPEED
0'17"027
4
1
75 km/h
MAX POWER

# ENDGAME




## SHAQ-FU

» Shaq-Fu saw the eponymous legendary basketball star and part-time rapper use his famous brand of 'Shaq Attack' basketball to crush an evil mummy in an inter-dimensional fighting tournament and save a child. The story was silly, the gameplay painful, the fighters instantly forgettable, and the ending closed everything in the same terrible fashion



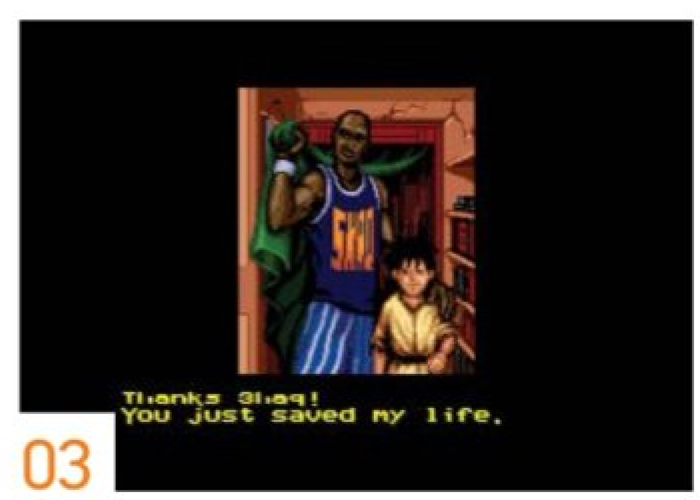
01

» Shaq delivers some potent Shaq-Fu to the evil mummy Set-Ra. If you squint really, really hard you might be able to make the two of them out. Shaq is the one in the long shorts, Set-Ra the one in grubby bandages.




02

» Shaq's triumphant. Defeating Set-Ra, the battered mummy spurts the usual 'I'll be back' line, instantly dulling the impact of the ending and making you wonder quite what the point of everything was. Oh yeah, the boy.




03

» Shaq exits the shop's backroom/ gateway to a second dimension, and returns the boy to his grandfather. A stickler for good shop fitting, Shaq suggests that the old man get some filler over those cracks around the door.




04

» With just 14 seconds left on the clock, Shaq finally reaches his basketball game. His team – Shaq and the Shaqs – are 50 points down, but Shaq isn't worried. He's awesome. He's Shaq. It's time to unleash the Shaq Attack!




05

» But wait, the generic red sub-boss has been signed to the opposing team. With now just seven seconds of the game remaining, Shaq focuses, floors the beast with a stare, and goes on to score 52 points, winning the game.


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